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Ripe for revolution in Egypt

The Arab World and its 'nations-in-waiting'

Dena Nicolai

CAIRO, EGYPT—As the sunset prayer echoes over Cairo during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the pulsing metropolis stills for a moment. Cars pull over while drivers break their sunlight hours of fasting with the traditional dates and tamarhindi juice, some heading into the mosques to pray. Then the city starts to awake from its no-food, no-drink, no-cigarettes sleep, and the feasting and celebrations begin.

Merriment, however, is tempered with the troubling reality of life in Egypt: poverty, an authoritarian government, foreign interference and a growing unemployment rate. Egyptian President Mubarak is growing older and his succession is unclear. It's a combination that encourages revolution, but it's not clear whether this country—accustomed to a pattern of fasting and feasting—will be able to break

its fast from the status quo.

A recent issue of *The Economist* tellingly titled its 14-page special report on the Arab world "Waking from its sleep." The author, Peter David, posits that the Arabs are waking from the "corrupt, opaque, and authoritarian" governments that ail them and that their fasting from revolution may almost be over.

Bread and circuses

One aspect of the awakening that David does not discuss in detail is what some Arab sociologists have labelled "the ticking time bomb of poverty." A 2008 Al Jazeera documentary on Egypt titled "A Nation in Waiting" points out that the people of Egypt (and indeed of many Arab countries) have struck an unspoken deal with their respective authoritarian governments: secure our livelihoods and we'll leave you alone.



A girl carries a bag of recyclable items she found rummaging through garbage.

In Egypt they've stuck to this pact, putting up with sham elections, a stagnant economy, and what journalist Robert Fisk calls

"embedded corruption" in return for government subsidies on bread. In Egyptian colloquial Arabic, the word for this subsidized staple is the

same as that used for "life," which tells you all you need to know about why Egyptians are not rioting against their regime.

The poverty bomb is still ticking, however. The World Bank estimates that at least 40 percent of Egyptians live in poverty, and the number of those making less than \$2 per day is continually rising. Those getting rich off business deals and corporate oil make useful examples for Egyptian propaganda, but for the average Egyptian, the BMWs are only a stark reminder of the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor. And, as David says, many of those Egyptians who are profiting are specifically apolitical in order to avoid antagonising "the governments on whose patronage, permissions,

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'I'm Egyptian first'

It's important to note that "the Arab world" is not a single entity. When the "Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey 2009" surveyed those in traditionally Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), more people identified themselves first as a citizen of their country (35 percent), rather than as an Arab (32 percent), or even Muslim (32 percent).

The same identity debate goes on in Egypt today. Ask anyone this question—"Do you consider yourself to be Arab?"—and it will elicit emotional responses, especially among a mixed group of Christians and Muslims.

"I'm not Arab. At all. I'm Coptic and my ancestors can be traced back to the Pharaohs, not to the people who came to Egypt from the Arabian peninsula," says Ramez, a 32-year-old Orthodox Christian.

"Of course I'm Arab," says Dina, a Muslim, "but I don't necessarily consider that as my main identity."

Another Christian, this one Evangelical, says "I have no problem calling myself Arab. But I'm Egyptian first."

Fair or foul?

The aftermath of a presidential ousting in Honduras

Angela Reitsma Bick

TEGUCIGALPA, HONDURAS—It sounds like the plot of a Hollywood movie: 100 soldiers storm the president's house at dawn, overcome ten bodyguards and send the president into exile using his own jet. It's not a new blockbuster, however; it's what happened in Honduras in June. And the international community is still trying to understand the implications of these events.

On June 28, Honduran Armed Forces entered President Manuel Zelaya's home and arrested him, obeying secret but legal orders from a Supreme Court judge. The Supreme Court is one of three independent parts of Honduran government. The judge was acting in

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Soldiers surround the president's home in the national capital on the day of the arrest.

News

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licenses and other favours they depend.”

Unemployment compounds problem

Although David reports a general feeling of optimism among the Arab World's ever-younger population, many in Egypt feel differently.

“I'm young, I'm educated, I speak English, and I have skills,” says Michael, a 25-year-old from Cairo's upper middle class. “But I have no hope for Egypt, no hope at all. As soon as I can get out, I will. Maybe if I lived in a place like India I would stay. What I mean is – I think India has many of the same social and political problems as Egypt, but at least they're starting to have real democracy, and they're starting to change. If I lived in India, I would have hope – I would feel that it was worth it to stick out the problems.”

The UN Development Program estimates that the Arab world is in need of 50 million new jobs by 2020 in order to keep up with its



Egyptian MP Saad al-Husseini negotiates with agitated factory workers.

ever-increasing youth population. Egypt is a prime example. As Mahmoud, a shopkeeper in the Khan el Khalili, one of the world's oldest bazaars, says, “Every year twenty thousand, thirty thousand students graduate from University. And for what? There is nothing!”

Some scholars, both Arab and foreign, argue that there is little that is unique about what is currently coursing through the Arab world, including Egypt. After all, religious-secular power struggles, authoritarian regimes,

unemployment and conflict over resources are hardly special to the Middle East. Tumultuous changes and power shifts have been occurring in societies and civilizations for generations. The difference is that outsiders are paying more attention to the Arabs, particularly in our post 9-11 world. And not all of the attention is helpful.

Foreign interference

In recent years, the Arab world has been flooded by “winning hearts and minds” campaigns of varying forms. Some of the most ambitious have been in Egypt, particularly those funded by the American government's US Agency for International Development. Unfortunately, these programs have been very selective, doing little for the average Egyptian. They have fed into the pockets of already

wealthy and powerful businessmen and have not created sustainable jobs.

The Bush administration's “War on Terror” and push for its version of democracy and supposed freedom also yielded little. The election of Barack Obama was seen as a positive change, but even the 10-year-olds hawking plastic Pharaoh masks at the Pyramids of Giza will tell you that though Obama is good, “he might be too weak.” His June “Speech to the Muslim World” in Cairo spoke more of respect than freedom, and though it was a welcome change from George Bush's rhetoric, some Egyptians worry that this may mean less American pressure on mass human rights violations by the Mubarak regime.



Mubarak and son Gamal at the World Economic Forum.

Even the idea of democracy seems too weak in Egypt. Though President Hosni Mubarak pacified some with his “constitutional reforms,” billboards of his son Gamal have subtly begun to appear around Cairo, which suggests a Pharaoh-like succession rather than a real election. Either way, it's hard to picture the people having much say in the matter. Some people here believe that the American government and the Egyptian military have already sat down and come to an agreement. Whether or not it's true, it's yet another strike against hope for democratic reform.

Chance for change

If Egypt's fast against revolution is indeed almost over, it's difficult to know what breaking the fast will look like. Though demonstrations take place all over the city every day by groups ranging from farmers to feminists, most are quietly corralled. It's hard to feast on revolution when baton-wielding riot police and massive emergency laws stand in your way. When will it be time to break the fast of the status quo? Even *The Economist*, after 14-pages, isn't quite sure. David calls it “the great unknown” and until more answers become clear, it appears that Egypt and the rest of the Middle East will remain “nation[s] in waiting.”

So fasting life continues in Cairo. It's hard to imagine a revolution on these streets. After another night of Ramadan celebrations, the sun begins to rise and the city slows down again to conserve energy during the fast. Open-air fast food shops shut their doors and carts selling special Ramadan pancakes tuck away until sunset. These scenes echo their way across the immense “Arab world,” and even those who are not fasting settle into the rhythm of Ramadan. ✕

Dena Nicolai works in Cairo, Egypt with the Middle East Studies Program of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. She is originally from Edmonton.

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conjunction with the National Congress – both were concerned that Zelaya had plans to adjust their constitution and allow for his re-election. Their concerns seem justified: President Zelaya tried to use the “populist politics of the left to bring about a dream of despotism,” writes the *Washington Post*. And according to *The Economist*,

“Mr. Zelaya's presidency has been marked by a rise in crimes, corruption scandals and economic populism.”

Once Zelaya was in exile in Costa Rica, the Speaker of Parliament, Roberto Micheletti, was sworn in as an interim President. Micheletti is from the same political party as Zelaya, next in the



Micheletti

Presidential line of succession. On July 1, a “state of exception” was declared by the new government, which suspended certain civil freedoms. The international community, however, isn't sure how to respond or whether interference in Honduras is necessary. The only foreign governments to recognize Micheletti's government so far are Israel and Taiwan; most have followed President Obama's lead in calling for Zelaya's re-instatement. Canada has offered what some call lukewarm support of the new government – by being the only country in the hemisphere not calling for Zelaya's return to power, and by not suspending aid to Honduras. On August 24, Peter Kent, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs (Americas), travelled to Honduras as part of an impartial, international commission. The mediation process between Zelaya and Micheletti is being overseen by

What's the legal argument that this was a coup?

The fact that the military arrested Mr. Zelaya at gunpoint and, most important, exiled him, are the key points raised by world leaders who call the events a coup. The Organization of American States (OAS) voted unanimously to suspend Honduras from the regional body, citing Article 21 of its Inter-American Democratic Charter, which states that if there is “an unconstitutional interruption of the democratic order of a member state, and that diplomatic initiatives have failed, the special session shall take the decision to suspend said member state.”

What's the argument that it was not a coup?

The interim government, led by Roberto Micheletti, claims that a coup never occurred in Honduras because the military was operating under court order, never assumed power, and had the support of nearly all institutions in Honduras.

Zelaya was pushing forward with an attempt to hold a nonbinding vote to consider a constituent assembly, which the Supreme Court declared illegal. Article 239 of the Constitution is the key. It prohibits presidents from running for re-election, and it states that whoever does so, or proposes to do so, must immediately vacate the office.

Under Article 272 of the Constitution, the military could argue that it was exiling the leader in its mission to defend public order and the Constitution. –Sara Miller Llana (CSM)

Costa Rican President Arias.

Although many international newspapers described the events of June 28 as a *coup d'état*, Micheletti's supporters in Honduras say that Zelaya's arrest was completely legal. Guillermo Fiallos, CC's Honduran correspondent, has degrees in journalism and in law. Fiallos describes Zelaya's government as one of the most corrupt in Honduran history. There are rumours that the ex-president perpetrated violence and facilitated drug trafficking with Venezuela, and evidence that he and his team stole millions of tax-payer dollars. “Zelaya was a puppet marionette of Hugo Chavez,” Fiallos says, leading the country slowly left-ward toward socialism. He was not above using “religion to deceive many people.” At least some of Zelaya's crimes have come to light in the past two months, including a security video from the Central Bank of Honduras, sent to the *Washington Post*, which shows officials withdrawing \$2.2 million in cash. Three witnesses saw these officials bring the money to Mr. Zelaya's chief of staff, four days before the President's arrest.

In April, a Mitofsky opinion poll said that only one in four Hondurans approved

of Zelaya, and now the numbers are sure to be lower. Fiallos points out that the Supreme Court, National Congress, Armed Forces, Honduran Ombudsman, leaders of Catholic and Protestant churches and at least 80 percent of the people are against Zelaya. If he returns to Honduras, he faces 18 criminal charges and up to 20 years in prison. Given these circumstances, it seems astonishing that world leaders still insist Zelaya is the legal president.

If there's one silver lining, it's that a constitutional crisis like this will hopefully prompt Honduras to draw together as a country and to re-evaluate its electoral system. Guillermo Fiallos says the biggest challenge facing Honduras now is the rebuilding of the economy, which was destroyed by Zelaya's ambitions. Equally pressing, however, is to tell the world the truth about Zelaya. “Honduras people feel like David against Goliath,” Fiallos writes. Many doors in the world are closing because of the events in Honduras since June



28, but “we prefer this to having a thief return to power.” ✕

Angela Reitsma Bick lives in Barrie and is co-editor for CC.

News

TD Christian High narrowly escapes major tornado damage



Tim Buwalda

On August 20, a tornado ripped through the Vaughan neighbourhood that encompasses Toronto District Christian High School (TDCH). Environment Canada estimated that, at their peak, winds from the tornado reached speeds between 180 and 240 km an hour. Damage to the area was so severe that the city declared a state of emergency, with 200 of the 600 damaged homes described as "beyond repair."

Aerial footage from a TV news station helicopter, taken the next day, clearly showed the path of the storm: a trail of roof-less homes, uprooted trees, and major debris that ends right at the doorstep of TDCH.

While destruction to the neighbourhood was quite extensive, amazingly, the school was hit relatively lightly. Lots of debris, including ten-foot long sections of 2x4s and even a 2x10, were found on the school's roof. Several pieces punctured holes in the roof, causing minor water damage, and a panel was torn off an air conditioning unit. On the edge of TDCH's sports field, a half-dozen old, sixty-foot high trees were ripped to shreds, and a large section of a neighbour's roof was found in the nearby creek.

"It could have been a lot worse," says TDCH principal Ren Siebenga. "When you look just down the street from our school, you got a sense of just how devastating this storm was."

The school is currently finishing up a \$3 million dollar expansion that will be opening this fall. Thankfully, it did not sustain any damage, and no one was hurt.

"While we are grateful that our school escaped the brunt of the damage, we feel for our neighbourhood," added Siebenga. "This is going to take a lot of time and effort to rebuild."

School spared expensive cleanup

Uprooted trees and fallen branches along the West side of the sports field left

the school with the unnerving prospect of a time-consuming, laborious and expensive cleanup. Fortunately, the City of Vaughan and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) came to the rescue very quickly. Less than eighteen hours after the city was declared a state of emergency, 32 Fire Rangers were on their way to help from Pembroke, Haliburton, North Bay and Sudbury.

"We mostly fight forest fires, but we help out in emergencies across Ontario as well," said Ted Shannon, a Fire Management Supervisor with the MNR. "Our crews are ready to deploy on a phone call's notice."

In addition to Shannon, the workers included a safety officer, two logistics people, and seven four-person chain-saw crews. Describing the parkland area directly adjacent to TD Christian's sports field, Shannon stated, "From what I've seen, this could be the nastiest tree damaged area. It's so thick it's almost impenetrable. It's very tricky work for our chain saw operators."

While the Fire Rangers tackled the knotted mess of downed branches and trees, City of Vaughan crews chipped the pieces they cut out.

"We're extremely grateful to Linda Jackson, the City and these crews from the Ministry of the Natural Resources," said principal Ren Siebenga. "There's

Why abortion is different

Over the years in this space I have been critical of those pro-life Christians who cast their votes solely on the abortion issue. After all, governments have a full array of duties to perform in fulfilling their central task of doing public justice. Even if a government fails in one area, it may discharge its other responsibilities conscientiously, thus earning the support of its citizens. On the other hand, a given leader may claim the pro-life label and yet demonstrate incompetence in governing. This ought not to be taken lightly.

However, those claiming that abortion is just another issue are themselves on shaky ground. In the current policy debates in the United States, a number of activists are claiming that health care, too, is a moral issue, as are the environment and the minimum wage. It would not do to belittle such claims, because there is a large measure of truth in them.

Yes, health care is important. It is so because, if all people have access to the best medical attention possible, they can fulfil their life callings. Similarly, it matters that we protect the environment, because we owe it to future generations whose lives will depend on it. Christians, in particular, are aware that, as God's image-bearers, we have been given stewardship over this earth, which we are to use wisely and carefully. It is indeed necessary that we ensure that all workers be able to feed and clothe their families and to keep a roof over their heads.

A justice issue

Nevertheless, not all issues necessarily have the same import or significance – something the language of morality may mask. In fact, there is a qualitative difference between abortion and the cluster of issues touched on above. In the case of the latter, no one disputes that the environment must be protected; the current debate revolves around how best to do so. Some favour a market-oriented approach, while others are convinced that government must play a central role. Again no



Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

one denies the desirability of furnishing the best health care to all citizens. Disagreement arises over whether this is best done through private or public insurance plans. Though Canadians and Americans have taken different paths on the issue, both approaches have their flaws – serious flaws, as it turns out, which illustrates that calling health care a moral issue cannot itself resolve the political debate.

Abortion is different. Here the quarrel is not over the best way to protect the unborn; it is precisely over *whether to do so at all*. Those believing women should have the right to terminate a pregnancy hold this position *despite* the presence of the vulnerable child. Those who believe that the unborn deserve protection do so *because* of the child's presence. This fundamental disagreement over what is at stake is what sets the abortion issue apart from most others. Proponents of the so-called consistent-life ethic generally fail to comprehend this. Such bishops as Denver's Charles Chaput are right to make a fuss over Catholic politicians who support abortion rights. Abortion is not merely a private opinion; it is a clear matter of justice that needs to be addressed head on.

This does not mean there is no room for compromise. It would be politically foolish for pro-lifers to push for a total ban on abortion and refuse to accept half measures that would fall short of this lofty goal. Yet, it is quite another thing to deny, as some Christians do, that abortion is a justice issue at all and to equate it with, say, health care, where the overall policy goal, if not the means of getting there, commands general agreement. ➤



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning *Political Visions and Illusions* (Inter-Varsity Press). His blog can be found at: <<http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>>.

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Ted Shannon, Fire Management Supervisor, Sudbury, Ministry of Natural Resources

Editorials

A Calvinette without regret



Angela Reitsma Bick

I used to be a Calvinette. Every Thursday, in our church basement, nearly a hundred girls would complete Bible lessons and work on badges for accomplishment in sewing, baking or etiquette. How closely these skills aligned with John Calvin's own, I'm not sure. Nonetheless, I was happy with this Reformed version of Girl Guides.

This year, on the quincentennial of Calvin's birth, Christians everywhere are re-evaluating what it means to be part of a denomination that can trace its roots to that 16th century Reformer. John Calvin's influence on Reformed theology can be found in a strong emphasis on doctrine and on a faith that is deeply rooted in Scripture. In a nutshell, as a Reformed Christian I believe that God is sovereign. My faith has implications in every part of life, in every part of the world, since every part of it belongs to the Creator. In that sense, I guess it's not so weird to have a church full of little Calvinettes learning how to knit while they read the Bible.

Two years after I graduated from the program, Calvinettes disappeared. What the Young Calvinist Federation from Michigan thought "catchy" in 1958 was outdated by 1995, so the organization was re-christened GEMS Girls' Club, to "better convey the mission and vision" of getting Girls Everywhere to Meet the Saviour. This transition reflects an important change in the Christian Reformed denomination.

From the 1960s onwards, thousands of members of the Christian Reformed Church left the denomination over the women-in-office debate or because the charismatic movement seemed more welcoming. Those Calvinists are too stuffy, some said. They can't raise their hands in worship or even clap in rhythm. Secessions and schisms shrunk this denomination in the second half of the last century, and a series of compromises – necessary for unity – has softened the idea of Reformed as my grandparents knew it. Some appreciate the changes, especially in worship style, while others worry that we've lost a focus on substantive, doctrinal preaching. Those are the ones who miss the Calvinettes.

Meanwhile, as arguments about minor issues like hymnal editions took up just as much time as major ones such as six-day creationism, North America changed. And as it changed, North America's culture powerfully influenced our denomination, more than a debate over predestination ever could.

My generation has grown up under banners proclaiming tolerance, diversity and moral relativism. We have travelled more and expect more than our parents did. But (not surprisingly) that life and that set of beliefs are not satisfying. If some baby boomers in the 1970s thought the church was irrelevant, a new generation – drowning in too much that is meaningless – wants something relevant again. They want someone to revere. And that may begin to explain the resurgence of Calvinism in the last five years, though it's not coming out of the CRCNA. It's in the American Evangelical community, and it's making headlines beyond the church newsletter.

Where the new Calvinism comes from

Collin Hansen, contributing editor for *Christianity Today*, published a book last year called *Young, Restless and Reformed*. It's an outline of his travels across the US to hotbeds of the new Calvinism (see Marian Van Til's "The Other Calvinists" in CC, Aug. 24). Hansen explains why young people are turning to TULIP after too many years of a "watered-down version of God in the evangelical, seeker-friendly churches" (21). Through their sermons and books, charismatic leaders such as Joshua Harris and Mark Driscoll have won thousands of followers. The new Calvinists, many of them Baptist, sound very Reformed when they emphasize truth over technique, theology over therapy, and ministry over management (108). They see the sovereignty of God as a counter-cultural message, but it's clearly a popular one. Young people "have plenty of friends," Hansen says. "What they need is a God." That's why more and more people in my generation are choosing father-God over buddy-Jesus.

This past March, *Time* magazine published an article identifying the "Top Ten Ideas Changing the World Today." Surprisingly, the liberal publication listed Calvinism as number three. Although the depictions of Calvinists are not always flattering (micromanaging deity, classic Protestant backbiting), the article lists the same up-and-coming Calvinists that Hansen's book does. The Reformed renaissance is where "all the energy and passion are in the Evangelical world," according to Tim Olsen, managing editor at *Christianity Today*. The current issue of that magazine has a feature article calling John Calvin the comeback kid: "Why the 500-year-old Reformer retains an enthusiastic following today."

A *Banner* article in August drew attention to *Time*'s Top Ten list. Calvinism is on the rise, Rev. Alvin Hoksbergen notes, and he wonders – in passing – "why the RCA and CRC traditions weren't mentioned." Hoksbergen goes on to explore what it means to be Calvinist and where our denomination might go from here, but he doesn't answer his own question. He doesn't say that we've argued and accommodated ourselves right out of a distinct job.

I enjoyed exchanging emails this summer with James Schaap, and at one point we were discussing more or less the same thing. As he sees it, the evangelical world looks to Calvinism for strength and thoughtfulness, but as they've been doing that most lay CRC have been moving in the opposite direction. That fits with my experience: while we tried to figure out if "Community Christian School" sounds less intimidating than "Calvin Christian," evangelical scholars have been emphasizing the *Institutes*. Rev. Hoksbergen acknowledges that Calvinism "has not had positive press in recent years. Its critics have characterized it as a dour, rigid view of God that leads its followers to a less-than-appealing way of life." What the *Banner* article does not say is that we were among the critics. We were embarrassed by our own doctrinal heritage. And that is a shame, more than being left out of *Time* magazine or Collin Hansen's tour of young, restless Reformers.

I have two girls, both too small for school yet. If they want to go to GEMS when they're older, I think that's wonderful. Meeting the Saviour is important. I wonder, though, whether they'll meet a father-God or a buddy-Jesus when they get there. Can you be pals with the King of creation? Either way, I'm going to start by telling them about when I was a Calvinette. ✂

The stones cry out



Brett Alan Dewing

Since my last editorial, which consisted of thoughts on death, there have been several deaths in my small village. Most notably, my granduncle died (peacefully in his

sleep) and a peer's sister took her own life. Among the many other thoughts and emotions such a period brings, I found myself making a visit to my favourite place: the cemetery.

Childhood haunts

There are two main cemeteries in Warren Center, Pennsylvania. The larger of these is the township cemetery on the hill behind my house. I grew up climbing the hill and making the circuit of those grounds on a regular basis. There were many names I recognized, as everyone in Warren Center is related, and that familiarity was comforting. As well, there were older stones, whispering specifics of a Warren Center before my time, when names like Amaziah and DeLeon were not only in use but attached to walking, talking pillars of the community.

The second official cemetery in the village is called the Coburn-Dewing Cemetery. Not surprisingly, it is home to many departed Dewings and therefore great personal history. The layout of this rural graveyard is peculiar. A large stretch of grass divides the shiny granite graves in the front from the worn-smooth markers in the back which speak volumes from bare slate.

The Coburn-Dewing Cemetery borders the State Game Lands, which comprise much of Warren Center. The really beautiful cemeteries are found out in those untamed woods – sudden clusters of ancient stones in small family groupings. These not only convey that someone important lived, but that someone important lived here.

The great cloud of witnesses

To me, these are sacred grounds where I feel the undeniable presence of the saints. As I walk among their ebenezers, I can feel their encouragement and their perspective. They have run the race, fought the fight, done all to stand. And their message is that it is possible, it is good, and it is only for a time. As an often discouraged and bedraggled man, those times of nurture and reassurance are nothing short of life-giving.

I feel deep communion with this cloud of witnesses who have preceded me. They are my people, my tribe. Time among them is not only an interaction with the past but a true participation in the present. Their paths of righteousness refresh my soul, and I am able to arise and go with a greater appreciation of everything life outside that iron fence brings. ✂

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Letters

Internet bridges distances

Our question to our readers last month was "How much time do you spend on email and/or Facebook? Has your life been enriched by either?"

August Guillaume of Edmonton, Alberta, writes:

"How much time do I spend on email and/or Facebook? I went on Facebook to keep up-to-date with one of our children who gives updates about their adoption plans. I have used e-mail since the beginning 1990s. Daily use: approximately 10 minutes on Facebook and 2.5 hours on e-mail.

"Currently, the e-mail tool allows me to keep in easy contact with far-flung family and friends. I also use it for some of my volunteer work, especially refugee matters and church-related mail distribution. Generally, e-mail has allowed me to work more efficiently (I seem to be able to do more "work" in the same amount of time)." ✂

Column struck a familiar dyslexic chord

Thank you, Rudy Eikelboom, for your August 24 column on dyslexia. My wife and I often think that I have some form of dyslexia. I had to check the spelling of "dyslexia" to make sure I got it right!

I have been a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church for almost 28 years. Churches that I have served have considered me to be a relatively good preacher and pastor.

But I graduated out of grade eight with a grade-three reading ability and a spelling ability to match. I, too, learned to read by memory. I understand phonetics and know the sounds to the letters, but when I read, all that becomes insignificant. I got good grades in Greek and Hebrew in Seminary, but it wasn't because I had a natural feel for languages (which my wife has), but because of my very good memory.

When I see colleagues read Scripture from the pulpit, I notice that many of them keep eye contact with the congregation. I cannot do that. My eyes must remain glued to the page, and, even then, I stumble. I also have the habit of projecting words I already know on top of words that I don't know and end up seeing words that aren't even there. I sometimes pull words out of sentences above and below and throw them into the sentence I am reading.

Throughout elementary and secondary school I seldom read a book. Only in college did I begin personal reading. But I rejoice to say that I now read extensively and have read close to, if not more than, the 600 books Bob Zomermaand refers to in his article in the same issue of *CC* in which your column appeared.

Never again!

I will bore you with a just a few other embarrassing examples of my dys ... (how do you spell that again?) dyslexia.

While I attended Calvin College, one of the things we had to do for Dr. Evan Runner's philosophy class was write a paper on "What is A Thing?" This was before personal computers, so it was hand-written;

and I had pay to get someone to type it. The lady who typed it was so disgusted with me, she said she would never type a paper for me again no matter how much I paid her.

Some years ago, I was asked to submit a sermon for the Living Word Series. These sermons are used in "reading services" in the CRC. I got a letter from a Mr. Ron DeGroot, who was a writer and editor for a paper in Edmonton. I think he also wrote in *CC* in those years. He read the sermon in his church. He thought my sermon was good, but was appalled by the condition of the manuscript. His criticism was most scathing. I'm still not over it. He sent me a photocopy of the sermon in which practically every sentence had corrections.

Years later I was again asked to submit a sermon, and this time I got a phone call from *CC*'s Stan DeJong, who had edited the submitted sermon because he thought it was good sermon. But, said he, with anger in his voice, he would never ever do it again. I am still not over it. He probably thinks every pastor is dys ... (how do you spell that again?) dyslexic.

In the early 90s I wrote a book, partially to fulfill the requirement for a Doctor of Ministry Degree in Preaching. Fred DeVries, a former catechism student of mine and a graduate of Carlton University's School of Journalism, edited it for me. No lie, just about every sentence had to be corrected. I paid him a bit of money for his efforts, but I could never afford to pay him for what his efforts deserved.

I could go on and on. Maybe we'll get together some time and share stories. It might be therapeutic for both of us.

Your article has already been helpful for my marriage. It gives me one more thing that I can blame my faults on. (LOL)

Before you send it on as a letter to the editor, could you pass it by your faithful spell-checker Cara, please? ✂

With love and appreciation,

Dirk Miedema, Pastor of
Maranatha Christian Reformed Church
Woodstock, Ontario

Love the transition

Sorry this is late, but please sign us up for two years.

We have been cheering for you at *CC* as you've gone through this transition. And, so far, the paper looks great, as you balance between news of the world-wide church and what is going on in Canada. It's good to keep translating what it means to be Reformed, eh?

Blessings. ✂

Agnes and Andy Kramer
Hamilton, Ontario

See more letters on page 6.

What do you think?

This month we ask our readers to consider the following question for their input:

"In the light of recent articles about the re-emergence of Calvinism, how do you see Calvinism? Do you value the Calvinist heritage? How has Calvinism influenced your life?"

Please send your letters of response to Bert Witvoet via bert.witvoet@sympatico.ca.

Rudy replies

I can relate very well to many of the things you mention in your email. Just one other antidote [*sic*, editor]: when I was younger and a student in a Montreal daily Vacation Bible School (about 1958 or so), I foolishly decided to memorize the titles of all the books in the Old Testament. (I had a friend who was memorizing the titles of *all* the Bible books.) Memorizing the first number of titles went fine, but when I got to the prophets and the second half of the OT, I was in trouble. My father tried to help, but his memory of the book titles was in Dutch, and these were in English. At the end of the weeks of Bible School, we had an evening for the public and we had to strut our stuff, as it were. My friend breezed through the over 60 book titles in no time. Then I got up, in shorts, and by the time I reached the Psalms, things were not going well. Trying to remember the pronunciation of the books proved overwhelming, and the exercise was painful for all. People in the audience were helping by wording some of the books, and

my knees were knocking together. At some point it was over, and I resolved never to read names again or go up in front of an audience in shorts. Now, about 50 years later, I have no problem lecturing in shorts, but I will not read or memorize a list of names ever again – the pronunciation of all but the simple names defeats me. ✂

Rudy

Cara de Haan joins the conversation

Thanks so much for including me in this conversation, Rudy and Pastor Dirk! I hope it's not offensive to say that I find your stories very entertaining; your humility (not your humiliation) is an encouragement to me. I'd be happy to edit anything you write that the *CC* would like to publish (and I hope they do). ✂

Cara

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Letters/Column

Glad we hung in there

I think that CC has improved greatly over the last number of months. More resources are being tapped. The articles are kept short and deliver a punch that makes you think. I also like the humour that is included. Kudos!

I've been reading CC ever since my youth. My Dad read it faithfully. He felt that it was a good substitute for *Het Friese Dagblad* or *Trouw* [two Dutch Christian papers].

When Ann and I got married in 1968, we received a year's subscription to CC from our church. We renewed it every year. There were times when we discussed cancelling our subscription because we were too busy to read it and the articles at times were long and boring. We hung in there though.

I was sad when Harry DerNederlanden passed away. I always liked his articles. They were humorous, inspirational and thought provoking. ✂

Chris VanderVeen
Brantford, Ontario

Reflections after reading the July 27 issue of CC

I've been keeping up with reading the *Courier* this summer, as my friend and I are sharing a subscription.

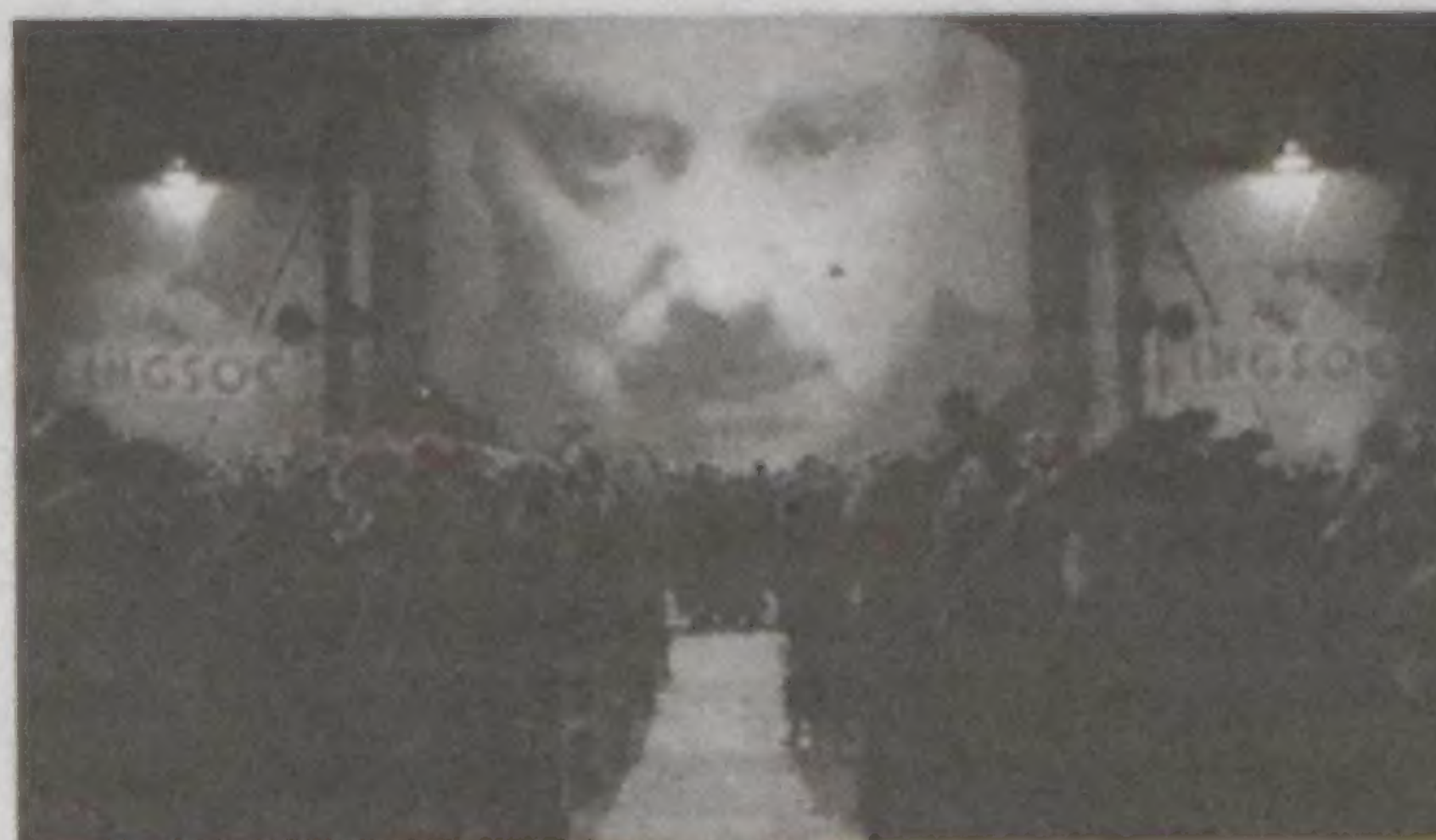
The editorial about your buying a wood carving, and later feeling guilty about it, is interesting to me. When my friend and I went to Mexico in 1970, we bought a lot of items, mainly because we had so much fun bargaining for them. The guys working at the resort where we were staying kept telling us we were doing great, that the sellers really didn't expect anyone to pay what was being asked. But then, when my husband, Bob, and I went back to Mexico many years later, I found I couldn't do the bargaining any more. I just felt that they needed the money more than I did. It did mean I didn't buy as much of course.

And then this morning I read your review of Aren Geisterfer's book, *Igor the Acolyte*. He was pastor in Woodstock the years I was there – in fact, he did our wedding ceremony in 1972. I don't think I've ever seen him again since we got married, but I certainly remember the war stories he would weave into his sermons. In Scarborough, there was a family who went through so many of the same things in Indonesia. Oma Schnitzler lived into her 90s and told me many such stories when I used to visit her. What a horrible time that was – in Europe and in the East. I'm considering ordering his book.

We'll be heading to Beamsville later today to celebrate my sister Ruth's 60th 'day. On this date, that many years ago, my mother gave birth to twins, welcoming them into a house that had no hydro, or running water ... and was already full with seven other children! Unfortunately, Ruth's twin brother, Johnny, died at 11 months of pneumonia. And only four months later my dad was killed when his bicycle was hit by a car. What a horrible time that was for my mother. But she, too, was a woman of faith, and stayed strong through trying times. ✂

Riekie Kramer
Pickering, Ontario

Personal information and privacy



In George Orwell's book *1984*, the government (or "Big Brother") watched everyone constantly through "telescreens," a practice that resulted in a bleak, depressing world with little freedom. Nowadays, many of our activities are monitored through the data trails that we leave. Data banks record our financial transactions, our employment history, our health



records; and websites log the sites that we visit. Everywhere our data is being mined, and information often leaks into other hands. Some warn of the "big brother" society that will emerge with the

introduction of implantable identity chips and RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tags. Some have reached the unlikely conclusion that these new computer tracking technologies represent the "mark of the beast."

In Canada, the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA) was established to govern the collection, use or disclosure of personal information. PIPEDA defines personal information as "information about an identifiable individual" that includes information such as name and addresses, gender, income, blood type, or credit records. Under PIPEDA, personal information must be collected with consent, used for a reasonable purpose, disclosed for the limited purpose for which it was collected and stored securely.

Facebook sees red

Last month, Canada's Privacy Commissioner identified the popular social networking website known as Facebook for failing to meet several requirements of Canada's privacy laws. There were several areas of concern that were highlighted. Among these concerns were Facebook's lack of safeguards to prevent almost a million third-party developers around the world from getting access to users' personal information. Also, they found that Facebook does not allow users to delete their profiles; instead, it archives the data for an indefinite period of time.

Different countries have established different approaches to governing the use of private information. For instance, in the U.S., information ranging from financial records to health data is governed by the USA Patriot Act. This controversial act allows the government nearly limitless access to data banks

Dr. Derek Schuurman is a member of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario. At the time of writing, he still does not have a profile on any social networking sites. However, he does have a faculty webpage hosted by Redeemer University College at <http://cs.redeemer.ca/derek/>. Even though he can delete his webpage at anytime, it is still archived on sites such as the "wayback machine" at www.archive.org



Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman

containing personal information with the intent of being able to identify terrorists.

We are called to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's", and indeed this may very well include some of our information. A government needs certain kinds of information in order to govern effectively and to make good decisions. In fact, statistics, polls and opinion surveys are often used to shape government policies. However, some of the information in our personal sphere falls outside the legitimate sphere of government, and the collection this information may be seen as over-reaching and possibly lead to abuse.

The same is true for information collected by commercial companies. In order to do business with a company, there is a legitimate exchange of information that needs to take place. For instance, ordering a product from a company may require you to provide your name and address. However, attempts to collect additional personal information beyond this may not be justified, especially if it leads to the nuisance of ongoing unsolicited marketing activities such as spam, junk mail, and sales calls.

There is no such thing as a free lunch, and it seems the price many are paying for participating in many online activities is their personal information. Another example is customer loyalty cards, which provide "free" incentives in exchange for swiping customer cards at the purchase counter. With the purchasing data that is harvested, marketers can form a detailed profile of our lifestyles, activities, and even our health. Some people find this notion creepy; others gladly sacrifice some of their privacy in exchange for some "air miles".

Open and discreet

Should Christians be concerned about personal information and privacy, even if they live "just and upright" lives? I think we need to avoid the extremes of "airing all our laundry" on one hand, and being paranoid on the other hand, while recognizing that there are appropriate and legitimate situations to disclose information, and other situations where it is prudent not to do so. Privacy can be one way of "loving our neighbour" when it comes to respecting information that affects others. Paul warns Timothy about "gossips and busybodies" who are "saying things they ought not to" (1 Timothy 5:13).

I think it is also important to have a sense of what should remain in our "personal spheres", and what is appropriate or helpful information to share publicly online. Perhaps this is one example of where we ought to be "shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16). No matter how we guard our privacy, we recognize that God sees all. As Christians, we realize that nothing we do can be hidden from God's sight (even if we use the strongest encryption!). In Ecclesiastes 12:14 we read that "God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil". In the meantime, Christians should continue to discuss what it means to be faithful in this regard and be discerning when it comes to their personal information and privacy. ✂

SEPTEMBER 14, 2009

News

U.S. debate on health reform heats up

President Obama faces death threats

Harold Alkema

A recent U.S. publication reports that President Barack Obama currently receives over thirty death threats a day, a 400 percent increase over his predecessor, George W. Bush. Unlike George Bush, however, Obama has not come to power in a controversial election, started costly foreign wars or failed to cope in the face of a serious natural disaster. Instead, the current president has raised the ire of many American voters by opening up the debate on health care reform. (A touchy subject in a country where millions have no health coverage of any kind and where major corporations make billions off policyholders fortunate enough to be able to afford health benefits.)

Despite the various legitimate interests involved, the U.S. debate seems frightening by Canadian standards because of the violent symbolism and rhetoric that some American protesters employ. For example, a man in New Hampshire appeared at an anti-Obama rally with a handgun in leg-holster. (In that state it is legal to carry firearms as long as they are not concealed). The gentleman in question was also sporting a t-shirt that read: "It is time to water the tree of liberty." This was in reference to a longer quotation by Thomas Jefferson: "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants." Images of the armed protester circulated to various news agencies via the web, alarming many. U.S. history has seen four presidents gunned down in public and attempts made on the lives of eleven others.

Campaign gone ugly

Such events have led some Americans to conclude that the U.S. political scene is inherently violent. Stephan Hess, of the Brookings Institute in Washington, reviewed the mail of Dwight D. Eisenhower, in 1961, shortly after the president left office. Hess noted that some of the letters addressed to Eisenhower included suggestions of assassination: "Here is a man who is a retired two-term president, revered, a five-star general in the last just war, and he's getting dozens of dozens of death threats." Hess also explained that current technology, especially email, could play a part in increasing the number of threats received by the president today. Over the internet, such suggestions are "anonymous" and "instant"; thus it is unlikely that protestors would ever have to answer for statements that could be considered hate speech in other circumstances.

Other pundits blame the Republican Party for the current mood in U.S. politics. Political Scientist Cal Jillson, of the Southern Methodist University in Dallas notes that Republican politicians have engaged in "rhetorical excess" that has made the town hall meetings on health care reform and tea party gatherings the scenes of such ugly protest. Former Republican Vice-Presidential nominee Sarah Palin, for instance, stated in a recent Facebook message that White House "death squads" posed a threat to the life of her disabled infant son. With regard to such statements, Jillson says the following: "The Republican party is on a knife's edge here — they have certainly bloodied the Democrats politically on health-care

reform, but they risk going too far."

Author Ronald Kessler adds that the threats of violence come at a difficult time for the Secret Service, which has seen its budget severely cut back. Kessler has been reported as saying: "There's no question his life is in danger. Tomorrow, Obama could be assassinated ... simply because the Secret Service was not doing what it used to do." An assassination, or even an assassination attempt, could act like a spark in a powder keg, igniting U.S. politics.

The general hostility in the U.S., however, has not been focused solely on the country's first African American president. A Democratic lawmaker from Washington state received a faxed death threat after he labelled angry town hall demonstrators "a lynch mob." Representative Brian Baird was forced to cancel all his scheduled town hall meetings after he received threatening phone calls. Protesters hanged

the likeness of a Maryland congressman in effigy at one town hall and displayed the artificial tombstone of a Texas politician at another. Such actions are particularly disturbing given that the town hall meetings on health care reform are to be calm and rational forums for the concerns and wishes of common American on this issue.

As the debate south of the border heats up, Canadians can be glad that while our health care system is not perfect, this is a public policy matter we have dealt with decades ago. It also reminds us that although Canadian politics is not always polite, it is usually non-violent. ✂

Harold Alkema has a Master's Degree in History from the University of Waterloo. He currently works as a researcher in Ottawa with a private firm specializing mainly in Native Affairs issues and historical research.



Country living

Maynard van der Galien



World milk price collapse causes hardship for farmers

Canadian dairy farmers are the luckiest dairy farmers in the world. They are the only ones selling milk at a profit, while farmers around the world are losing money. It's all because of a world milk price collapse.

In Vermont, milk prices paid to farmers dropped to about \$11 per hundred pounds in June from \$19 a year earlier. California dairy farmers are reeling from the biggest monthly price collapse they've seen in 50 years, as they continue to struggle with high feed costs and now a global economic crisis that has crippled demand for dairy products.

The most recent price drop of more than \$6 cwt (a hundredweight or 100 lbs) will deal a hard blow to dairy operations that are already bleeding financially. U.S. dairy farmers are getting paid less for a gallon of milk than their fathers did in the 1970s.

Overseas protests

It's the same story in European countries. In May, some 6,000 dairy farmers with 700 tractors clogged roads in Berlin, Germany creating traffic chaos. Farmers blocked milk processing plants in France and they protested at European Union headquarters in Brussels, seeking more aid to cope with a sharp drop in milk prices.

EU farmers say they have been forced to sell milk below cost because prices have fallen by up to 50 per cent over the past year. Thousands of angry dairy farmers swarmed into Madrid, Spain, to demand a collective increase just so they could break even.

In Ireland, dairy farmers upset by recent price cuts, stormed into European Commission offices in Dublin. An estimated 8,000 producers protested below production costs milk prices in Prague, Czech Republic.

Dairy farmers in New Zealand will see their farm income shrink to \$17,000 this year from \$115,000 in 2008. Dutch dairy farmers have had their milk prices cut and are selling milk at below production costs.

Canadian system

Why did milk prices all over the world collapse, but not in Canada?

Canada has had supply management for milk since 1965. Canadian dairy farmers only produce what is needed domestically. Supply management is the mechanism by which milk, poultry and egg farmers in Canada adjust their production in order to meet consumer

needs. Products are mainly intended for the domestic market and not as exports. It's a different ball game in the other milk producing countries. American and European farmers need to produce less — a lot less.

A few countries (U.K., New Zealand, Australia) got rid of their milk marketing board and quota system. The U.S. never had a quota system for milk. Produce all you want for a lot less money than Canadian farmers get. Many American farmers have gone broke and many have quit.

Canada adopted the system of supply management for milk and poultry (which includes turkeys) in the late 1960s. This system was established to address the unstable markets, uncertain supplies and highly variable producer and processor revenues that were common in the 1950s and 1960s.

Advantage Canada

Supply management has been given a bad rap by many academics in Canada. Sure, there are things I don't like about it either, but the concept is good. Why overproduce? All industries, from car manufacturing to shoe factories, attempt to strike the most accurate balance between supply and demand. Under supply management, farmers attempt to do the same thing.

Last winter and spring Ontario's dairy producers couldn't supply enough milk. If the trend continued this summer they wouldn't meet their targets for matching supply to demand this year.

Poor quality feed harvested during last year's rainy summer gets the blame. This summer's weather is no better. Ontario dairy farmers had their quotas increased a little so they would up production.

The world milk price collapse was also caused by the uproar in China over melamine-tainted dairy products. It put a damper on the world market. The scandal was supposed to help sell American and European milk products, which were always safe, but instead consumers were so frightened they stopped buying dairy products.

The snowball effect saw a glut of milk on the market and the ones paying the price are the dairy farmers in Europe, New Zealand and the U.S.

The ones not in supply management. ✂

Maynard van der Galien
<maynard@renfrew.net> is a retired
dairy farmer in Renfrew, Ont.



News

Uplifting news from the Middle East

Joel van der Veen

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL – In July 2006, a group of Hezbollah militants from Lebanon crossed into Israel, kidnapping two soldiers on border patrol. In retaliation, the Israeli army began bombing the southern part of Lebanon. Hoping to weaken the terrorist forces, the army also sent in ground troops, including a 35-year-old soldier named Amit Bar-El.

One day while in battle, Bar-El discovered an injured comrade. Rushing to help his colleague, he opened a door, triggering a rocket in an adjacent wall. The rocket exploded, and a fragment tore through the left side of his head. The injury left Bar-El blind and paralyzed the right side of his body.

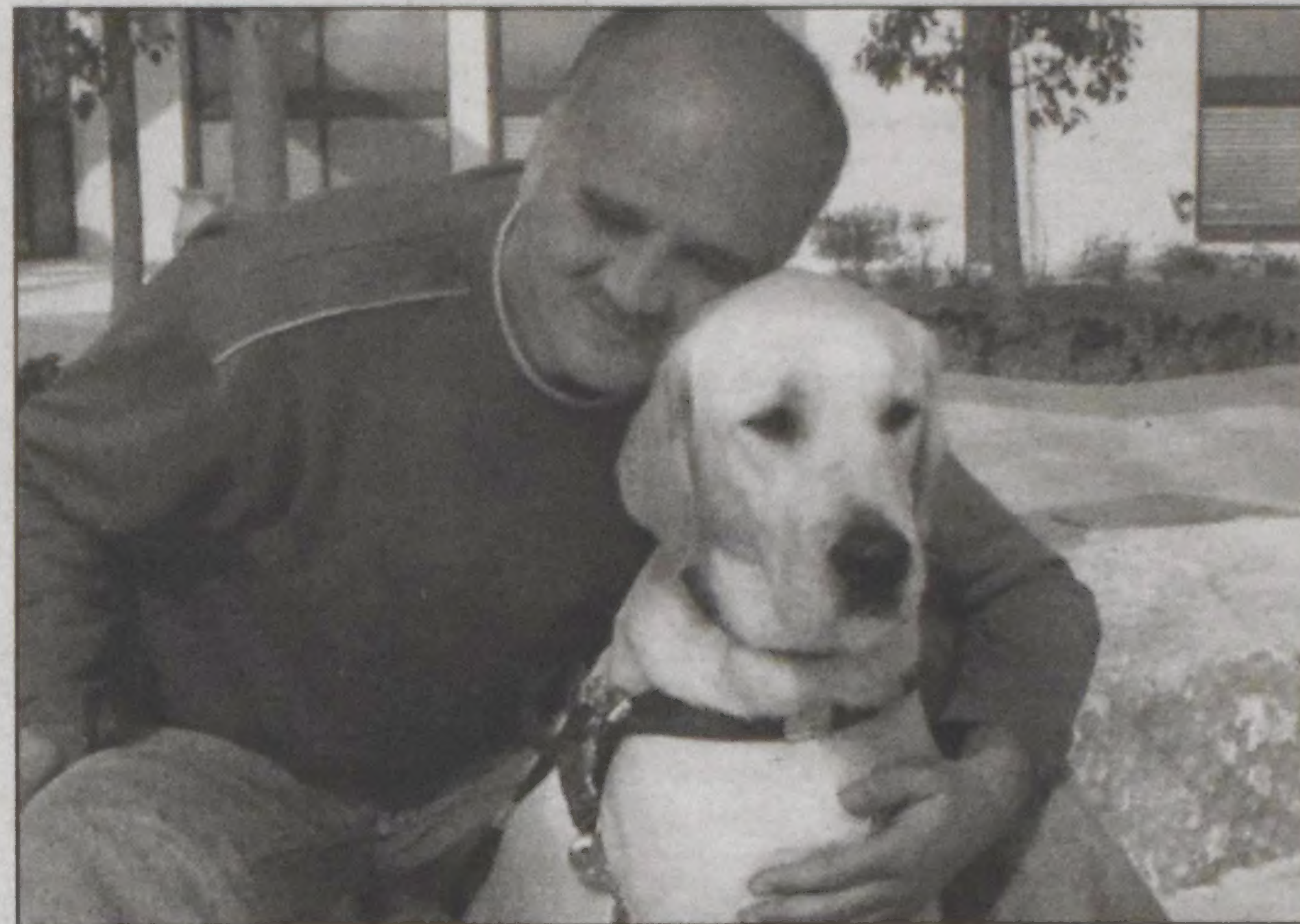
Bar-El endured a year of physical training in the hospital before he finally returned home to his family. But he refused to become a burden to them, and so he sought a way to

regain his freedom and mobility.

Enter the Israel Guide Dog Centre for the Blind. The centre quickly approved Bar-El to receive his own guide dog, plus all the necessary support. "There was no one in the world happier than I was," he recalls. Shortly after, he started his training with a black Labrador named Dylan, and the two became fast friends.

Bar-El is one of more than 200 blind people assisted by the centre since its establishment in 1991. The centre – located in Beit Oved, about 20 minutes from Tel Aviv – provides the dogs free of charge, training them and ensuring that they are a good fit for their master. The blind also receive training on how to communicate with, and care for their dog.

Guide dogs can provide the blind with mobility and independence, but beyond that, they can also provide them with a greater sense of their potential. "It changed my life



Two of the program's successful members.

A palace of water – a tent of stars

Earlier this summer, I went on a canoe trip to Algonquin with some old friends from Redeemer College.

At night we had to huddle under a tarp to keep dry. And still, we were the wettest group of humans since Noah's neighbours.

For breakfast, we had black instant coffee and a pita with jam. I lost count at 100 black fly and mosquito bites.

And, man, was I happy.

For two reasons:

First, I was happy because there are no friends like old friends.

I hadn't seen some of my former dormmates for 20 years. I think each of us was worried about the possibility that our friends had changed too much or – worse – not changed at all.

Within minutes we were caught up. Within a few hours we were cracking jokes. By the end of the trip, we wondered why it had taken so long to get together.

We talked about our lives and the turns they had taken. Some of it was joyous, some of it sad, most of it was simply sharing how we had been led.

We discussed theology, and philosophy, politics and education – just like we used to – but weighed down with hard-won worldly wisdom instead of being buoyed by the exuberant inexperience of youth.

I had better, richer conversations over the course of that weekend than I have had in many, many years.

We've all kept in touch through Facebook and email, but it's not the same. There is an immediacy in the campfire conversation. Something that is primitive, and pure, and right.

You and God

And, second, I was happy because I was in a place where God reveals himself to us.

Because a canoe trip gives back to you precisely what you put into it.

Everything you do is powered by you. From "making" drinkable water to making meals on a portable stove, to setting up camp and scrounging for wood and, above all, paddling and portaging ... there is a one-to-one ratio of effort and enjoyment you don't find every day.

On an average workday other people's schedules and demands, other people's accidents on the highway, other people's missteps and mishaps can derail your day.

Not so on a canoe trip. Miss the next lake, or the next meal, and it's your fault. You didn't push hard enough, didn't get through the rain, didn't plan the route properly or account for being wind bound. Your legs gave out or your arms were tired. It's all about you – and it is an unforgiving experience.

But once you achieve that realization, the insights arrive.

I recalled my favourite passage from Psalm 104:

"Bless the LORD, my soul! LORD, my God, you are great indeed! You are clothed with majesty and glory, robed in light as with a cloak. You spread out the heavens like a tent; you raised your palace upon the waters. You make the clouds your chariot; you travel on the wings of the wind."

External power

Stripped of my Blackberry, and email, and cable ... with no other rhythm but the thumping of boots on hard ground or the lapping of paddles in the water ... I came to

another realization:

Ultimately, you don't move the canoe. The canoe moves you.

As it moves you through nature, nature moves through you. The smallest things speak to you – the bend of a reed in a creek, telling you where the current is, and how strong. A gap in the trees across the lake that is your next portage. A sudden applause of leaves, warning you that a storm is coming.

The canoe moves you through your own nature, too. Not only do you shed your distractions, you cannot afford them. It takes all your focus and skill to turn the bow into the whitecaps, to read the river, to bear-proof the site. As the trip goes on, you become stronger, and harder, and discover instincts and abilities (and weaknesses) you never knew existed.

And, finally, the canoe moves you back towards the spirit, the soul, towards God. It is hard to escape the feeling that this kind of simplicity – this kind of balance between effort and achievement, time and distance, man and nature, reflection and action – that this is how we are meant to live.

Not scrambling to fulfill a schedule, not pawing at our pockets for our cell phones ... not cursing other drivers for making us late for a meeting....

You begin to realize that we are meant to live simply, that we are meant to live with each other, touch one another, and be in communion with one another, with God and with his creation.

You move the canoe.

The canoe moves you.

And that is all. ✨

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) is a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville, Ontario.



completely, raising my self-esteem and self-respect," writes one person assisted by the program.

Justifiably man's best friend

The centre's co-founder and current president, Norman Leventhal, was inspired after meeting Noach Braun, a former paratrooper for the Israeli Army. Braun learned to train guide dogs using the skills he gathered working with bomb-sniffing dogs. The pair joined forces and launched the centre in a rented house.

The centre invites Jews and Arabs to take part as both students and dog trainers. The centre's beneficiaries include those injured in accidents or violence, as well as those made blind by disease or illness. While the Israeli government provides some assistance, the vast majority of the centre's funding arrives through donations and bequests.

In 1994, the centre moved into its present facility, which includes exercise areas, whelping kennels, and a full veterinary clinic. Expansion plans include the acquisition of more land for the breeding and training of additional dogs. While many of Israel's blind still wait for assistance, the centre continues to grow, with an increasing number of "graduates" each year.

As for Amit Bar-El, after taking his first walk with his dog, Dylan, he was amazed. "It was the most wonderful feeling I have had since I was injured," he said. "What a sense of freedom." ✨

Joel van der Veen was born and raised in Peterborough, Ontario. He is presently studying journalism at Ryerson University in Toronto.



News

Humans for sale: The tragedy of trafficking in Canada

Chandra Pasma

OTTAWA, ON — In May of 2008, a Brampton, Ontario man pled guilty to trafficking two teenage girls. Imani Nakpamgi began exploiting one of the victims when she was fifteen years old. For over two years, he sold her for sex on a daily basis, controlling her through vicious beatings and threats against her family. When she wanted to leave, he told her there would be a \$100,000 exit fee.

Nakpamgi also trafficked a fourteen-year-old girl for two months. He made over \$400,000 from his exploitation of the two girls.

Although Nakpamgi was the first person in Canada convicted of human trafficking, this is far from an isolated incident. Canada is a destination and a source country for this type of slave trade, as well as a transit country. The RCMP estimates that up to 800 people are trafficked into Canada annually, with an additional 2000 people believed to be smuggled into the United States through Canada. These numbers, however, come from official incident reports and only represent the cases where police have been involved in some way. The real numbers are likely to be much higher.

The new slave trade

The United Nations (UN) defines human trafficking as "recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them." Exploitation can include prostitution, forced labour, or even the removal of organs. In Canada, victims are most commonly forced into prostitution or the drug trade, but they can also be used in agricultural or service industry work, or as domestic labourers.

Many victims are controlled through violence or threats of violence, and as a result, they are extremely vulnerable. They often have little or no access to health care, and become dependent on their captors for survival. This makes it very difficult to escape or ask for help. Victims who have been trafficked from other countries have a hard time resisting when they speak no English or French. Some of them come from countries where the justice system is corrupt and they may not trust police. As a result, many cases of human trafficking go unreported.

Recruitment takes various forms across the world. Some people, facing limited

opportunities in their home country, respond to ads offering all-expenses paid trips to Europe or North America for high wage jobs. Upon arrival, they are stripped of their passports and forced to work off the cost of their trip. Sometimes poor families are targeted with offers allowing them to sell their children in exchange for economic security.

Some men entice young women by posing as boyfriends, dazzling the women with money and opportunities and then suddenly forcing them to change locations and grooming them for the sex trade. In Canada, this recruitment can even begin on social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace.

Victims can be men, women and children of any education background or socio-economic class. Certain factors, however, can make people more vulnerable. Poverty, lack of education, lack of job opportunities, racism and sexism all contribute to the persistence of trafficking.

In Canada, young Aboriginal women appear to be particularly targeted. They are recruited on reserves then brought to major urban centres and forced to work as prostitutes or drug mules. In some Canadian cities, up to 90 percent of street-involved, sexually exploited youth are Aboriginal.

Canada's response

Even though Canada ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons in 2002, Canada has been slow to take action on human trafficking. Trafficking was added to the Criminal Code of Canada in 2005, but so far there have been few convictions.

Most of the current efforts to address

trafficking come in the form of private member's bills. These are bills that are sponsored by individual Members of Parliament rather than the government, and therefore have a much smaller chance of being adopted than government bills.

Canada has also been slow to address the root causes of trafficking, including poverty and racism. Many Aboriginal communities live in conditions akin to the developing world, yet Canada has no plan to combat poverty.

Unfortunately, the government voted against a motion in June that called for a strategy to deal with human trafficking before and during the 2010 Olympics. Many major sporting events coincide with an increase in trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Trafficking is a fundamental violation of the dignity of every person created in the image of God. Trafficking turns people into commodities — one more thing to be bought and sold in a free market. It also takes place in the context of other violations of human dignity: poverty and inequality, racism and sexism.

Human trafficking is a crime that should be stopped, as it was with Nakpamgi of Brampton, and punished appropriately. And we will never adequately respond to the challenge of trafficking unless we simultaneously promote the rights and well-being of every person. This challenge is one we must all face — citizens and governments alike. Our response must affirm the value and dignity of every person. ✂

Chandra Pasma is a policy analyst for Citizens for Public Justice in Ottawa.



World Evangelicals combat trafficking

Marian Van Til, with files from EFC and WEA

MARKHAM, ON — A leader of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) is joining a worldwide group of evangelicals in their effort to reduce a form of modern-day slavery. Jocelyn Durston, deputy director of the EFC's Centre for Faith and Public Life, has been appointed to the task force on human trafficking of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).

The taskforce was recently created to "prevent and combat trafficking by developing strategic and effective actions and tools that will help equip the local churches and their leaders to become responsive to the victims of human trafficking," says the WEA. To do that, the taskforce admits that it first needs to raise awareness about the issue "across the WEA community." That community represents 420 million evangelical Christians worldwide in churches and organizations in 28 countries.

According to WEA spokesperson on human trafficking Commissioner Christine MacMillan (who also serves as the director of the International Social Justice Commission of The Salvation Army), the taskforce's mandate consists of the following:

- Awareness-raising events with WEA members and surrounding communities;
- Community-based projects that address intervention strategies in highly trafficked parts of our world;
- Engagement with regional UN offices to build collaborative think tanks and take subsequent action;
- Empowerment of local churches to influence civil society;
- Developing a social justice paradigm among churches;
- Raising the issue of intervention in human trafficking with vulnerable and at-risk persons.

Resource materials for local churches are available from WEA and major projects are already taking place in Canada, Eastern Europe, India and Australia. ✂



Jocelyn Durston: new appointee to the task force on human trafficking.

According to Hollywood...



Taken, a movie starring Liam Neeson, shows how an retired spy reacts when his teenage daughter is abducted into the sex trade in Paris. We get a few horrible glimpses of this unpleasant French underbelly: complicit police, girls sprawled on mattresses in drug-induced stupors, even a high-class auction for female flesh. But if the director wanted to awake sympathy for the victims of human trafficking, he could have done a better job. Neeson's ruthless actions make the story about his machismo rather than understanding what is happening to the kidnapped girls. Even worse, the victims are always viewed through their captor's eyes, making the viewer a kind of participant. A film exploring what it's like to endure being trafficked would be a more honest portrayal of this little-known crime. ✂

—Angela Reitsma Bick

Church

CRC marks 50-year link to Cuba



for Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM). "A new generation of pastors is being formed."

There are 13 Cuban CRC congregations, but there are also as many as 100 house churches or prayers cells that have developed, says Pellecer. As many as 5,000 people have been worshipping at one time or another over the years in the Cuban CRC.

Began with one-woman effort

CRC connections to Cuba go back farther than 1959 – to 1940, in fact, when a 20-year-old woman named Bessie Vander Valk, a member of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Paterson, New Jersey, "became convinced that God wanted her to go to Cuba to spread the gospel," says Dan Miller, a historian at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Vander Valk married a young preacher by the name of Angel Vicente Izquierdo and they established an independent church. Eventually, she convinced LaGrave CRC in Grand Rapids to support the work. LaGrave, as well as other congregations and at least one CRC classis, has been active in Cuba in many ways over the years.

For example, LaGrave played a role in the 1959 decision to initiate ties between the CRC in North America and what became for a time the Interior Gospel Mission of the Christian Reformed Church.

Although it was difficult, the

church in Cuba has kept on. It has been persistent but low-key, says Rev. James Dekker, who served in Cuba for short stints as a missionary and teacher. Members of the church have been faithfully submissive to the Cuban government, nevertheless, "they have pushed from inside against the restrictions put on them from society," says Dekker.

Despite an American economic embargo, people of faith in the U.S., Canada and Europe have supported programs including interest-free loans to enable home owners to improve their properties, free meals delivered to seniors in their homes, rides for people with medical appointments, and distribution of relief supplies following hurricanes, says Dan Miller.

Tensions have occasionally run high between Cubans who remained in their country and those who left for other countries. Through it all, the CRCNA has steadfastly remained a friend of believers still living in Cuba while also carrying out ministry among Cubans who live in the United States.

CRWM continues to assist the Cuban CRC with periodic visits for leadership training and youth programs. In addition, financial grants have been provided for literature and church reconstruction. "If freedom comes to Cuba, the churches will grow," says Luis Pellecer. "The future looks bright."

Outcry after murder of Pakistani Christians may influence laws

LAHORE, Pakistan, (CNA) – Unprecedented public indignation over the wave of attacks in Pakistan that have left eight Christians dead has led to the hope that changes in country's laws will help protect minority groups.

The Pakistani media has extensively covered the killings last month in the city of Gojra, and the resulting protests, strikes, prayer vigils and visits by the country's leaders. Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani then visited the area, where he announced a review of Pakistan's laws on religious minorities.

Christian leaders believe the situation is presenting a rare opportunity for the Pakistani government to introduce changes into the law.

"This is exactly the right time for the government to review the laws on blasphemy," said Bishop Joseph Coutts of Faisalabad. "At any other time there would have been a reaction against it, arguing that the honor of Islam and the Prophet Mohammed needs to be protected, but now the people can see very clearly the problems that these laws are causing, especially if they are misused."

But changing the law is not enough, say Coutts and other Christian leaders. "We need a radical change of attitudes so that people no longer emotionally react when they feel their religion is not being respected. What we have seen in recent days could lead people to think differently."

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Fifty years ago in August the Christian Reformed Church Synod agreed to open a mission field in Cuba and to help support the Reformed congregations already worshipping there.

That was 1959, the year that former Cuban President Fidel Castro came to power and instituted a socialist regime that slapped many restrictions on the practice of religion. Castro's rise resulted in the CRC having to

remove the missionary couple it had sent to begin work in that island nation.

Since then, while the CRC has been limited in who it can send to Cuba and how long those sent may stay, it has kept ties with Christian Reformed congregations in Cuba over the last half century. Those links have helped to maintain and foster vitality in the Cuban CRC.

"Today I see enthusiasm for a renewed commitment to evangelism in Cuba," says Luis Pellecer, Latin America director

Bishop takes on Planned Parenthood re: U.S. healthcare reform

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNA) – Cecile Richards, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, has criticized the U.S. Catholic bishops' work to exclude abortion coverage from health care legislation the U.S. Congress is considering. In response, one of those bishops insisted that taking human life is not health care and warned that pro-abortion politics are endangering the legislation.

Writing in an August 18 opinion piece at the online *Huffington Post*, Cecile Richards characterized the bishops' desire to exclude abortion coverage from health care reform as one that denies "comprehensive reproductive care," which she claimed is supported by the majority of Americans.

She also argued that opposition to

abortion by Christians, and especially Catholics, demeans women. "Seems that, if the U.S. Conference had its way, the national healthcare system would make American women second-class citizens and deny them access to benefits they currently have," she charged.

Richard Doerflinger, associate director of the Conference of Bishops' Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, addressed Richards' claims. First, he noted, "The majority of Americans [once again] describe themselves as pro-life," are opposed to government funding of abortion and do not consider that healthcare "reform."

Pro 'choice'?

Doerflinger went on, "Universal coverage doesn't mean that Ameri-

cans are forced to pay for absolutely everything a doctor might be willing to do. Government healthcare would presumably not pay for euthanasia or legitimate but elective procedures like cosmetic surgery."

Doerflinger explained to CNA that in his understanding, the U.S. House bill being considered would cover abortion but in a "very limited" way. However, the Secretary of the Department



of Health and Human Services would have the power to mandate coverage for all abortions in the public plan.

"We're very much against that and hope it can be amended out," he said. "Under the House bill, the federal government will require

anyone who purchases the plan to purchase abortion coverage." The U.S. Senate presents a "more fluid situation" because there is no released draft of their bill. "We hope it will be better than the House bill," Doerflinger said.

"She keeps talking about how we're trying to diminish a right," he said of Richards. "A mandate is not consistent with a personal choice. If what she's talking about is people's personal ability to choose whether or not to buy abortion coverage, we're not going to oppose legislation that allows that. We're talking about the government mandating that people purchase abortion coverage against their will. Why would she be against that if she favors 'choice'?"

Ontario Catholic schools are 'best educators'

WATERLOO, Ont. (Catholic Culture) – A study conducted by an economics professor has concluded that once one factors out social and economic factors, Catholic schools in Ontario outperform their peers.

David Johnson of Wilfrid Laurier University found that "of 11 schools in Ontario that performed better than all others in both Grade 3 and Grade 6 in their socioeconomic range, ten of them are Catholic – yet [the Catholic system is] a much smaller school system."



Johnson continued, "About half the difference in test scores between schools comes from the social and economic differences between students – but the other half comes from the school itself, and that's what we're measuring." ✎

Outgoing WCC head blasts Israel, ignores Islamic persecution

Marian Van Til, with files from FPM
GENEVA, Switzerland – The departing chief of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC) slammed what he called Israel's "sin against God" in his good-bye to the world's largest ecumenical group.



Speaking on August 26 to the WCC's governing central committee, Samuel Kobia, a Kenyan Methodist minister and recent head of the WCC, asserted, "Occupation, along with the concomitant humiliation of, a

whole people for over six decades constitutes not just economic and political crimes but, like anti-Semitism, it is a sin against God."

The WCC was founded after World War II and, in the wake of the Holocaust, then robustly denounced anti-Semitism as a "sin against God." But equating the Holocaust on some level with the Israeli presence in the West Bank, Kobia asked his international church audience, "Are we ready to say that occupation is also a sin against God?"

The WCC has 349 member denominations representing 500 million Christians, or about 25 percent of global Christianity. But according to orthodox Christian observers the WCC never fully recovered from its 1970s alliances with Marxist liberation movements. Catholics and most evangelicals do not belong to the WCC. They see the group as the voice of declining Western left-wing Protestantism. Kobia is

leaving the WCC partly because of his own failure to reverse its declining organizational and financial fortunes.

According to those orthodox observers, the WCC has learned few lessons, and the Swiss-based group is little interested in Christian doctrine or evangelism. "It prefers mainly to echo the bland bromides of European left-wing secularists. More authentic Global South Christian voices, which are overwhelmingly theologically conservative, are typically ignored," says FrontPage Magazine.

Many African Christians, especially in the north sub-Saharan where contact with radical Islam is troublesome, are pro-Israel. But the WCC does not recognize the legitimacy of their views. And Kobia's 14-page good-bye said nothing about the Christian villages recently destroyed in Pakistan, about the ongoing persecution of Christians

across the Islamic world, or the vulnerability of Christians living in China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. He did mention Iraqi Christians, but blamed the U.S. for their predicament: "Iraqi Christians who had been forced to leave their country simply because they were Christians and the occupation of their country was seen as a form of modern day Christian crusade."

Most of Kobia's farewell speech, which also focused on global warming and the collapse of "turbo-capitalism," could have been delivered by Hugo Chavez, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, or any number of Third World tyrants, asserts FrontPage Magazine. It concluded, "Thankfully, neither Kobia nor the WCC speak for most of global Christianity, which thrives, even where persecuted, no thanks to its purported representatives in Switzerland." ✎

Lutherans narrowly adopt sexuality statement

Marian Van Til

NEW YORK – The largest Lutheran denomination in the U.S. – the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) with 4.7 million members – made history when it narrowly passed a new social statement on human sexuality last month. While many church members rejoiced, others felt the history made was dubious.

Voting members at the ELCA's convention adopted "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" with two-thirds of the vote, and exactly the number of votes needed to pass the statement.

The statement talks of "trust" and "bound consciences" and addresses various sexuality issues, including social structures, cohabitation, sexual exploitation, abuse and a controversial statement on homosexuality. Despite attempts to amend it, the final document supports "lifelong monogamous same-gender relationships."

"I doubt very much that I've ever been present at an election with that many votes cast coming out exactly two-thirds," said Rev. Peter Strommen, who served as chair of the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality. "We're naturally very glad that it passed."

While the majority of Lutheran clergy would agree with Strommen, not all do, and even fewer lay Lutherans feel that way. One dissenting pastor, J. Grant Swank, asked in an online column after the convention, "Whatever happened to 'Thus saith the Lord!'? That is the reasoning of biblical Lutherans. They conclude that divine revelation is already with us in the Bible. Therefore, why should a denomination's task force come to any conclusion about moral issues but what the Bible presents?" ✎



Nicaragua: CRWRC land banks transform lives

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. CRCNA – Land banks in Nicaragua have helped to transform the lives of more than 80 farmers and their families, Mark VanderWees, a mission worker with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), writes in a recent newsletter. The land banks are financed through the Foods Resource Bank (FRB), which is based in the U.S.

More than seven years ago, CRWRC – with the help of FRB – started to create a project that would lend money to farmers buy a piece of land. Most farmers in Nicaragua rented land and eked out only a marginal living. The program began with 16 farmers in one land bank. Now there are six land banks with 84 farmers. So far, three families have paid back the loans they received to purchase the property.

VanderWees explains the land bank program in the newsletter sent to supporters and CRWRC staff. "We buy large tracts of land and divide them in three hectare plots," he says. Three hectares, if farmed intensively, "can easily support a family." (A hectare equals 2.5 acres.)

CRWRC and its partners also help to teach farmers proven



techniques to improve crops, including how to fertilize the soil and prevent erosion, manage plant diseases and insects, and promote new varieties of crops, VanderWees says.

It takes a couple years for the land to start producing, he says. At the start, farmers are barely able to produce enough food for their family, let alone start paying back the loan. But soon, "something transformational happens: confidence replaces timidity; beans, corn and dozens of other crops are planted; flowers and vegetable gardens appear; zinc

roofs replace the plastic sheeting on houses; trees begin producing fruit and giving shade."

A recent survey showed that 90 percent of the people involved in the program have enough food to get them through the dry season. This is up from 10 percent three years ago. "These results are just the beginning of the change we hope to see happen, three hectares at a time!" writes VanderWees.

Partners Worldwide, a Christian Reformed Church affiliated organization, also works on food-related projects in Nicaragua. ✎

New Beginnings

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra

THE WISE MAN
BUILT HIS HOUSE
UPON A ROCK

We are in the process of building a new house. We've moved from our previous home and are eagerly anticipating the completion of the new construction.

I'm not a builder. Engineering, constructing, and working with tools does not come naturally to me. Yet, even though I wouldn't describe myself as handy, I'm not afraid of trying out new things. That is why I'm tackling the building of a new house, with a little help from my friends.

When I started out designing the house, I knew one thing: I wanted a lot of windows. I like light. But before the shovel was put in the ground, a few things had to happen first. There was an old house on the future site that needed to be demolished, and, because the building lot has a ravine on it, I needed to satisfy the demands of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) before I could obtain a building permit.

The house demolition was quite an event. The kids took the morning off from school for it. We sat on a blanket and watched a massive, mighty machine knock down the house as if it was made of Lego. What most likely took 12 months to build was flattened in a few hours.

The NPCA was something quite different. After a plot plan, a land survey, soil studies, a slope stability analysis, a geotech engineering report, meetings with the planning department, a town hall committee appeal and thousands upon thousands of dollars, the permit was finally issued.

A good beginning

Because my new house has a ravine in the backyard and many acres of vines in the front, I spent extra money on more than average and bigger than average windows to let the light shine in. After the footprint of the house was dug, the foundation needed to be laid. When the foundation was

completed, it looked to the uneducated eye as if it was no more than some concrete footings and walls. This was not the case. Not only did the foundation prove to be the most costly portion of the building, it was also the most important. It gave the entire house the support it needed for it to be built properly.

After the foundation was completed, the framework could begin. When the framers came, they marvelled at the well-constructed foundation. They told me that it was much easier to frame the walls because the foundation was well built. Then the dry-wallers commented on how the framers did a good job because the drywall was easy to hang because of the good shell of the house, which was due to the good foundation. The tapers and mudders said their job was easier because of the square drywall, the solid frame and the well-formed structure. The painters said the house was a joy to paint because the corners were square and even. The finishing carpenter who put the casing and trim around the windows said the windows were perfectly level.

The windows are beautiful. Our solid foundation allows me to see the Light.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

— Matthew 7:24-27

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives near St. Catharines, Ont. with his three children.

Every Spent September

On ligaments that taffy out with each unflinching pace,
The strain of one more time around can cripple stronger minds,
And signatures that bear the weight of every hopeful case
Compress and test the tensile strength of every tie that binds.

Time insists on limping on around its fraying track
On ligaments that taffy out with each unflinching pace.
So every spent September brings another spinal crack
And signatures that bear the weight of every hopeful case.

The binding cannot hold; things fall apart as they are read.
Time insists on limping on around its fraying track
With another fresh-cut boutineer of splintered wood and lead.
So every spent September brings another spinal crack.

The strain of one more time around can cripple stronger minds.
The binding cannot hold; things fall apart as they are read:
Compress and test the tensile strength of every tie that binds
With another fresh-cut boutineer of splintered wood and lead.

Brett Alan Dewing

Bienke's story (part VI)

This is part six of the life of Jacobina Wilhelmina Radsma, née Vlaar, as told to her daughter Marion. The series will continue in following issues.

During my second visit to Holland more than 20 years ago, I found out a little more about that dreadful night. I stayed with each of my brothers and sisters for a couple of days in turn. My sister Ma is considerably older than I am, and her five children had already married and flown the nest. Only my sister and her husband Jaap (Jacob) Sluys were left. I was ready for a quiet visit. We did a lot of talking. One evening we talked about the war and all the

things that had happened. During the course of the evening I happened to mention the odd and frightening circumstances of that night. Jaap startled his wife as well as me when he broke into a fit of laughing as he listened to my story. I asked him: "What's so funny? For us it was very scary." "Well," he said, "it was us." Our next door neighbour (whose daughter had screamed so loudly) had hidden many sacks of grain in his barn behind his house; under the grain sacks he had stashed weapons. It had become too dangerous to leave them there, so he and other members of his resistance cell had donned German soldiers' clothes and boots to retrieve their dangerous contraband from the barn and move it to a safer place, farther in the fields. Of course, neither we nor the neighbour girl were told this.

My brother-in-law said that this was the highlight of the five war years for him — that he could send his father-in-law back into the house at gunpoint! And no wonder that he knew through which holes my sister and I would peek! He had never told anyone this story until the night of my visit, 40 years later. My father died without ever knowing — even Ma heard the story for the first time with me. Jaap and his resistance colleagues never boasted — it was very dangerous working in the underground. Jaap is dead now, but he was a fine man and very active in the underground.

It was also Jaap who often shot flares into the night sky to light the ground so the planes from England would know where to go. Tommies, we called the English. Sometimes when it was a nice summer evening, our parents and we children would take our chairs and sit by the canal or behind the barn and watch the Tommies fly over, squadron after squadron. Once we saw a big fire far, far away. The sky was red and orange; the Tommies had fired the Hoogovens oil refineries in Ymuiden. And one time we saw an airplane shot down. It burned a zig-zagging course down to the earth and drilled deep into the ground barely a mile away from us. Fortunately, the pilot parachuted safely down, and some of our folk found him. The Germans never discovered him; local people hid him. When it was a little safer, he was sent back to England.



Adam and Bienke and Vlaar siblings.

Continued on p.19

Perseverance

Stick with it!

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

The final score of the basketball game was 58-2. My daughter's coach was frustrated with the team, not because they had lost, but because they had given up. She told them to expect a tough practice at 7:00 the next morning. One girl begged her mom, "Do you have some high heels I can walk in so that I can I break my leg? The coach says that it's going to be a tough practice, and I think they're all tough already!"

We can all relate to the desire to quit when defeat humiliates us or when circumstances

block the fulfilment of our dreams. But we can't win the game of life unless we persevere. Hebrews 12 calls all of us to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Because this race finds expression in the ordinary stuff of our lives – work, school, church, community, and family – it's crucial that our children learn to persevere in God-glorifying ways in all these areas. We can't simply hand them a neatly wrapped package labelled perseverance. Nor do we want them to rely on human strength alone. How then can we encourage our children to persevere?



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Start young

First, assign age-appropriate chores from the time they're young, and require that the tasks be well done. Sometimes parents – myself included – compensate for their children's inadequate work by cleaning up after them. When your son hastily swept the floor, did he miss the bread crust his sister dropped? When he washed the dishes, did he leave cheese stuck on the plates? If so, ask him to do the job properly. Although he may be nine years old now, he'll soon be 19. Then you won't be around to pick up

the pieces at his job site, and his employer probably won't be as patient with his sloppiness as you were. By teaching him to persist until the job is properly completed, you'll be teaching him a life skill that will make him a blessing wherever he works.

But what if your teenage daughter puts in her best efforts on the job and still faces obstacles such as an unfair boss, obnoxious co-worker, lack of appreciation, poor pay or boredom? Should she stick with it? Analyse each situation before you make a decision. Start by telling your daughter how you handled adverse situations at work. When I was a teenager, for example, I complained about my job. An adult replied, "Every job has something that's not enjoyable about it." He didn't say I should never quit, but his realistic perspective helped me understand the need to persevere.

Ask your daughter what kind of person will she become if she quits every time a hurdle is placed in her path. Through discussion you can help her understand the benefits of perseverance, to explore different

Hold up examples

Second, teach your kids that anyone who has accomplished anything of merit has had to study, work hard, practice and stick with it. Help them realize that successful people don't become skilled and proficient overnight. If your son dreams of being a musician, introduce him to professional musicians who practice hours each day. Tell him about G.F. Handel, who composed the Messiah after years of struggle and despair. "Some say the score was splotted and spattered with Handel's tears," M. T. Anderson wrote in *Handel: Who Knew What He Liked* (Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes, Candlewick Press, 2001).

If your child wants to be a writer, tell how her favourite best-selling authors persevered. Six publishers turned down *Peter Rabbit* before Beatrix Potter published it herself; Dr. Seuss's first book was rejected 24 times; John Grisham's first novel was rejected by 15 publishers. Read your child *The Perfect Wizard: Hans Christian Andersen* by Jane Yolen. Though many of his 150 fairy tales are familiar to us today, he faced many obstacles prior to their publication. Yolen says of Andersen, "It was not in him to give up so quickly. After all, he wanted

to become a famous man. He was prepared for some suffering" (Illustrated by Dennis Nolan, Dutton Children's Books, 2004).

Be an example

Third, set a good example. Perseverance is required for much more than obtaining career goals. It's necessary for the healthy functioning of all relationships. In that context, perhaps the best story of perseverance you can tell your kids is not the one you choose from the library but the one you live.

Do your kids see you and your spouse living out your marriage vows through thick and thin? Do they see in you a willingness to work hard in order to accomplish a goal in church, home, school, and community, despite frustrations? Do they notice that you persevere in treating others with respect even if they mistreat you? Do they see that even in the mundane tasks of life you're trying to bring glory to God? Do your kids observe you praying and reading the Bible, drawing on God's strength to persevere – because there is no other way to do so? In *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers makes that very clear: "It does require the supernatural grace of God to live twenty-four hours in every day as a saint, to go through drudgery as a disciple, to live an ordinary, unobserved, ignored existence as a disciple of Jesus" (Barbour Publishing Inc., 1963, entry for Oct. 21).

The gift of encouragement

Fourth, give the gift of encouragement. No one can persevere without the encouragement of others. In his essay "The Dark Years," Nelson Mandela related how he and his fellow prisoners persevered: "The authorities' greatest mistake was keeping us together, for together our determination was reinforced. We supported each other and gained strength from each other. Whatever we knew, whatever we learned, we shared, and by sharing we multiplied whatever courage we had individually" (excerpted from *The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear*, edited by Paul Rogat Loeb, Basic Books, 2004, pp. 73).

Our kids have a greater encourager on their side than a group of prisoners. They have the Lord who "loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope" (2 Thessalonians 2:16). Whenever they need encouragement to keep going, they can ask God for it. His supply is infinite! Knowing that, they can live with their eyes wide open, seeing God's encouragement provided in the most ordinary or exceptional ways.

For example, when I felt discouraged on my way to the hospital to be examined for a medical problem, I passed a bus stop shelter advertising a Canadian bank. Above the bank's name were these words in stark type: "Palm of my hand." Immediately I recalled God's words to Israel, "See, I have

engraved you on the palms of my hands" (Isaiah 49:16a). God used an unexpected avenue to strengthen me and help me to persevere. Can you remember a time God encouraged you so that you received fresh energy to carry on? Tell your kids about it.

Point to the Lord

Finally, help your children to persevere in making God-glorifying choices. From an early age, point them to the Lord who "loves righteousness and justice" (Psalm 33:5). When they are older, they may face pressure to use drugs and alcohol, become involved in premarital sexual relationships, terminate a pregnancy, cheat on an exam, bully a classmate, or participate in some other activity that dishonours God. So teach them now that God delights in his children doing what is right; they will reap a sure reward. Those who choose to scorn God's directives will reap the consequences. Teach your kids that it's in their own best interest to live out what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in his "Letter From Birmingham Jail": "We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right" (excerpted from *The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear*).

Although it's sometimes hard for teenagers to grasp, faithfulness is more important than friends. In *Remember: The Journey to School Integration* Toni Morrison wrote this caption for a photo of three Tennessee teens protesting desegregation at their school in the 1950s: "My buddies talked me into this. They said it would be fun. It's not, but these guys are my friends and friends are more important than strangers. Even if they're wrong. Aren't they?" (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004, pp. 28).

What if those teens had refused to carry signs denigrating African-Americans? What if they had loved justice more than pleasing their friends? How would others have been helped by their actions? Help your kids ask similar questions when they face peer pressure. How will it hurt them if they give in? How will it hurt others and God? Kids who understand consequences are more able to persevere in making right choices.

Your children will have many opportunities to persevere for their own good, the good of others, and the glory of God. Saturate their lives with the knowledge that you'll be there to support them and that you'll strive to emulate God's love for them, which always perseveres.

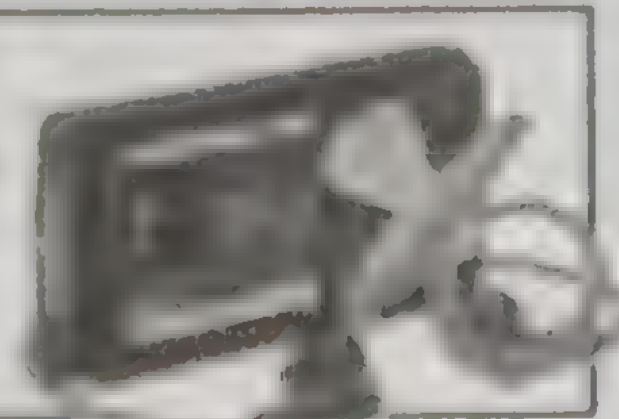
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Columns

From Toddlers to Teens

by Denise Dykstra

How do we love our kids?
Let me count the ways!

Kids can be hard to love. That's what I was thinking as I first sat down to write this column. It was mid-August, and I was deep in the throes of summer holidays. My house looked like a tornado had blown through it – and doubled back for a second round. My daughters resembled UFC fighters whenever they interacted with each other. And my three-year-old son was behaving like he hadn't slept more than four hours total in the last month and a half.

Don't get me wrong, I love summer holidays. I love sitting on our deck listening to the shrieks and splashes of my kids and their friends as they play in the pool. I love long evenings free of soccer, basketball, Army Cadets, violin and other church and school commitments. I love family walks after dinner, bike rides to the grocery store, and going for ice cream in the middle of the day "just because." Unfortunately, summer holidays aren't this idyllic 24/7. Eight weeks of free time doesn't always bring out the best in kids. That's what I was faced with the day I started this column.

Kids can be hard to love; that was my first thought. My second was this: but loving them really is very simple.

A variety of ways

How do we love our kids? By telling them how important they are to us, that's for sure. But there's more to it than that. We love our kids with our behaviour as well as our words. What we do often carries more weight than what we say. That's why Jesus instructed us: "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." (1 John 3:18)

We love our kids by playing a central role in their lives. By putting energy into our relationships with them. We love our kids by *knowing* them, not just doing things with them. This might seem obvious, but it isn't always accomplished. Busy parents sail through their days driving their kids around, feeding them, watching their activities, and tucking them into bed without really conversing with them. They know the grade their son got on his last quiz and the score of their daughter's most recent soccer game, but they don't know what their son is thinking or how their daughter is feeling. They love their children in their heart but they don't *give* their children that love.



Love in action

There are tons of parenting books out there in which experts offer advice on how to convey love to kids. Most of the suggestions I've read use love as an action word. Dr. Ross Campbell, author of *How to Really Love your Child*, suggests four ways to communicate love: through eye contact, physical contact, focussed attention, and discipline. Gary Chapman, author of *The Five Love Languages*, adds a few more ideas: gift giving, words of affirmation, and acts of service.

Parents can also show their love to kids

in practical ways. They can guide their kids when they need guidance, intervene when they're making poor choices, and rescue them when they need rescuing from the consequences of their choices. This isn't always easy to do, but it's all part of loving kids unconditionally. As Dr. Tim Kimmel writes in his book *Grace Based Parenting*, "Saying that we love our children and doing certain things that communicate love isn't enough. We've got to love them in the way that God loves us – when they're unappreciative, when they don't deserve it, when it's inconvenient, when it's costly to us, even when it's painful."

Does this sound familiar? Of course it does. It brings us once again to the feet of the cross. God's sacrifice of his one and only son is the ultimate example of unconditional love in action. What a gift to us! What an example for parents to follow! ✂

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The older you get, the older you get

Bert Hielema

I have in front of me a period Life table. True, it is a few years old and applies to US conditions, which are a tad less rosy than Canadian statistics, but that's all I could find. It affirms my point that "The older you get, the older you get."

Here is the proof of my premise. In the good old USA in 2005, a male baby at birth had a life expectancy of 74.81 years, while a female one had one of 79.75 years, a difference of almost 5 years. Canadians, thanks to their country-wide health insurance, do a bit better. But let's forget about that slight difference.

If we North Americans live till 65, men live, on average, till 81.73, and women till 84.5 years. It gets even better: at age 70, life expectancy is 83.3 and 85.7, respectively. Thus again slowly the men are gaining on the women. That trend continues, narrowing the gap at 75 to 85.26 and 87.24, and at 85 to 90.41 and 91.54.

I should add, perhaps, that a man lives an average of 15 years after becoming impotent. So, keep it up, you guys. Moses, at 120, still had excellent eye-sight and was still going strong, his natural force – including sexual drive – unabated. (Deut. 34:7).

So there you have it: the older you get, the older you get.

Economic burden

But – yes, there is always a "but" – getting older comes at a price, a steep monetary

one for the nation as a whole. Scores more of seniors mean huge tax increases in the near future. With a growing number of aging people and with fewer workers entering the economy, tax dollars to support our generous old age allowances and the increasing medical costs are becoming harder and harder to come by. The current stimulus injections, already causing immense deficits on all government levels, will make matters worse, especially in the USA and the European countries where governments have not been as prudent as in Canada.

So what are the real "old age" numbers? I am a great one for statistics: in 1900, 4.1 percent of U.S. citizens were older than 65, but by 2000 that amount had jumped to 12.6 percent; by 2030, 20 percent of us will be in that category. That means that if you are approaching 65 you will live to see 2030, when one in five will be a senior citizen.

Canada is not ready for that, even though it is in better shape than most other industrial countries. Although it is not a Bible text; nevertheless, it is true that "God helps those who help themselves." By this I mean that only you can take it upon yourself to become and stay in good shape, and so grow older without becoming dependent on waning government assistance. Because next to rapidly growing pension outlay, the cost of medical care is also growing exponentially, making it certain that our welfare state will not be able to continue in its present state.

Drastic changes

It is simply impossible to keep on conducting business as usual. Circumstances have changed dramatically. Look what's been happening: wages are flat or declining, consumer debt is up in the stratosphere, and job security is disappearing, while our natural habitat is suffering and the air is being saturated with our carbon deposits.

In other words: the old track is broken. The new track has fewer jobs, less income, larger deficits, increasing hardship and greater weather volatility. This simply means that the current economy can never "recover," and can never go back to where it was before the crash and before the environment was relatively pure. So instead of asking when the recovery will start, we should be asking what the new economy will be like and when the new economy will begin. Expect the unexpected.

Reasons for gratitude

However, there is a lot to be thankful for, and a lot we can do to cope with the future. First the personal part. For me, there are definitely great blessings in being older. For one, I am at peace. Tranquility is the word for me. No more battles to wage, no more arguments to win or lose. Let go and let God. I can't solve the world's problems, so I don't get worked up as I used to do. I have learned to accept the unalterable. Also, who knows, maybe I am not always right in my opinions. That's still a hard one for me.

All five of our children are doing well, while our grandchildren – we have seven granddaughters and six grandsons – are in no hurry to get married, something I can understand as well. I recognize that being single is different from what it was when I grew up. I also see much more clearly the interconnectedness of us humans with the entire creation. I love my vegetable garden – and hate to see the chipmunks destroy my beets for no apparent reason. I pray for my trees and am grateful that my apple trees bear abundantly. I treasure my bike and often pray while pedaling on my daily trek to the village, almost six kilometres away, along a busy highway, to get my Globe and Mail and other daily needs. If you want to stay alert, read, and limit T.V. to the minimum. If you want to stay healthy: walk, bike, run, and push a lawnmower, preferably an electric one.

Basically there is no such thing as being old as long as we stay active, socially involved, eat well and visit with friends and relatives, staying optimistic, agreeable and open to new experiences.

Remember, the older we get, the older we get. Age gratefully and graciously, and God will bless you. ✂

Bert Hielema was born in 1928, lives in Tweed, Ont., is the sole tenor in a 12 voice church choir and keeps a blog: <http://hielema.ca/blog/>. He can be reached at hielema@allstream.net

Kuyper

The Temple of the Holy Spirit (Part II)

*...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone
In him the whole building is joined together
and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.*

Ephesians 2:20,21

Abraham Kuyper

Having established that much, we have to go on to the second point and show that like any other body, this *body* of Christ is not only characterised by growth, but after conception had a period of formation in secret, before being born. When a child is born, we know that it existed before its birth. As an unformed substance it is wonderfully woven in the womb of its mother according to Psalm 139 when "you knit me together in my mother's womb" [vs.13]. At a certain point, but months before the baby is born, this unformed substance becomes viable. Yet it continues to be "hidden" in this condition for some time before it finally is born, and it will breathe on its own after opening its eyes to the light.

Coming out of the womb

This analogy of the child gives us a simple but accurate example for the birth and growth of the body of Christ. The birth came with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but that body did not begin to *exist* at Pentecost. For, long before it was born, this body had its existence in secret, hidden in the shadows of what was to come, concealed in the womb of her mother. It existed even from the time of Paradise, for that is where this body was conceived. For many centuries afterward it developed as an unformed "substance," until the time of Abraham when we noticed the first movements of new life. This life progressed and grew stronger in Israel.

But this Body of Christ, the body of his church, did not see the light of day until Pentecost. Until that time it had been hidden in Israel's womb and up to this point it had lived as if unaware of its own existence. It was not yet breathing on its own, aroused by its own spirit, or discerning the light with its own eyes.

All of these things happened after that first Pentecost Sunday. Before that time the body was completely formed, although it did not yet have its own breath, its own spirit, or the fullness of its own life. That is exactly what happened when the Holy Spirit was poured out on that day. At that point, when the church threw off the covering of Israel and *received the breath of life*, it appeared as a body, coming out of the shadows of the Old Testament period.

From then on it began its own conscious movement, and its eyes were opened to eternal light. Foreknown from eternity, conceived in Paradise, hidden in Israel until it was moving with life, the Church of Christ was born on Pentecost as a body which continues to grow and to develop right up to today. Some day this process will be completed, and she will be clothed in righteousness and adorned with jewels like a bride who is to be presented to the heavenly Bridegroom.

The Head breathes

If we are not mistaken, this brief but simple description should serve to resolve the question which we posed earlier regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. For now we can see clearly that the Holy Spirit was at work in the time of Israel even though Scripture also says that, "Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified." [John 7:39]

We have to apply the analogy of the as yet "unborn" and the already "born" child. While still unborn it is very much alive, but "breathes" through the body of its mother. Once it is born it lives and breathes on its own. Similarly

the church of God was enfolded in the people of Israel, and the work of the Holy Spirit was mediated through the life of the people of Israel: At Pentecost this working of the Holy Spirit came to the church unmediated. The mother's task was completed, the child was born, and the breath of the Holy Spirit flowed into its body directly to *inspire it from within*.

The problem of Jesus' own role at the birth of the church can also be solved easily. You might ask why did Jesus have to be involved? Is the Holy Spirit not also fully God, and if so, cannot God the Holy Spirit come directly to his body, the church? But those who speak that way forget one thing! Once born, a body cannot breathe except through its head. Before it is born, the child "breathes" through the body and blood of the mother and not through its head. This is why, earlier on, the work of the Holy Spirit could be observed in the body of the mother without Jesus' own intervention. Now that the church has been born, the situation has changed. The people of God are the body, but this body cannot exist without a *Head* through which it must breathe, be fed and receive direction. Just as it is unthinkable for a newborn baby to breathe on its own without first opening its mouth (which is in the head) to take in the air, so also is it inconceivable that Christ's body should receive the Holy Spirit except through its *Head*. We might say that the Head had to breathe in the Spirit first, before the Spirit would be poured out into the lungs and blood vessels of the body from the *Head*.

This is the meaning of the outpouring on Pentecost: Jesus has become the head of the church, because of his Ascension into heaven. This is also the moment the body of Christ can be born from the womb of Israel. This is followed by two other events; first, the Head receives the Spirit from the Father and takes it up within himself; and, secondly, after he has taken the Spirit into himself, He now pours that same Spirit out into all the members of his own body, i.e. his church.

Thus Pentecost is certainly not an outpouring of something external sent by Jesus. The outpouring of the Spirit simply means the flow of the Spirit from the Head, through the lungs and arteries, into the body of the church. And this is the same Spirit which Jesus "had received from the Father" [Acts 2:33].

Never alone

This explanation also serves to clarify the difference between the working of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, in the course of history, and his work among us now.

Just as the air we breathe in affects all the parts of the body *through the body* so also we, as members of the body of Christ, only receive the Spirit *through his body, the church*. Therefore to speak of the repeated outpourings of the Holy Spirit does not make sense. We can understand that an unborn baby lives without breathing by itself, but once *the child is born* that is impossible.

After Pentecost it is equally impossible to think that there would ever be a moment when the church would be without the Holy Spirit. It would mean she is no longer breathing and thus dead.

The church can at times *appear* to be lifeless, but never in reality. The Holy Spirit does not come to the church from without, not even during times of a great awakening. He always revives the body by working from within.

When your foot is asleep, or seems to be dead and frozen, the warmth of life can be restored to it only from within with a renewed flow of blood. One can rub the foot and massage it, but the restoration of well-being must come from within to be effective. It is just like that in the body of Christ. A member who may appear to be dead can

certainly be revived, but never without the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit only comes from within, originating in the Head flowing into the body, the church.

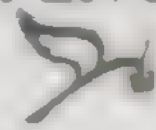
Gathering the pieces

We have now cleared up all the difficulties that presented themselves. Should someone ask, finally, about the purpose for this body of Christ still living here on earth, that too can receive a clear answer.

Behind the work of the Holy Spirit we *always* find the work of the Son; and behind the work of the Son we always find the work of the *Father*. The gathering of the elect into a church is not like finding various pieces of cloth which can be stitched into a cloak, but it is more like the gathering of many pieces of broken pottery which we know can be put back together to be restored into one beautiful vase.

The picture of the entire church was preordained in God's eternal plan, long before she was conceived in Paradise. Every member who is called is also equipped so that she will be able to fulfill that function of spiritual life which is essential for the growth of the entire body.

O, the depth of wisdom and of knowledge. Lord, how unsearchable are your ways!

How boundless is the comfort you give your suffering church. Comfort also for our soul! 

*This meditation by Abraham Kuyper has been translated
by Jack Van Meggelen (jack @vanmeggelen.ca), who lives
in Willowdale, Ontario*



MICHAEL D. WATSON

*Rushing winds and tongues of fire,
Not to injure, but inspire.
Blazing bright, but not consuming.
Loosing Spirit, love is blooming.
Other tongues, new language speaking,
Heart to heart the world is seeking.
New and mighty winds are blowing.
Something born and something growing.
Tongues of fire and winds of Glory
Sing the ancient Church's story.
Power unleashed across the earth.
The Church of Christ is come to birth.
Glory to the God-Head Three,
Alpha and Omega be.
Bless the wind and bless the flame.
Bless the Spirit's Holy Name.*

Worldview

Where there is love, there is vision: towards a Christian post-postmodern worldview

Jim Olthuis

What do you think would be helpful, from the perspective of a reformational worldview to emphasize for Indonesian Christians living as a minority people in the largest Islamic country in our postmodern world? In a nutshell that was the question that I was asked to address by Rev. Joshua Lie, a graduate student at the Institute for Christian Studies, when he, on behalf of the Reformational Worldview Foundation located in a suburb of Jakarta, invited me and my wife, Arvilla, to join them in Indonesia. So enthusiastic and animated was the reception my talks received, in Japan as well as in Indonesia, that when I received Bert Witvoet's invitation to write an article for Christian Courier, I knew immediately what it would be: postmodernism and a biblical worldview, with an eye on our own situation in the West.

At the outset, since many Christians respond nervously and negatively to postmodernism, I want to suggest that it is not, as so many fear, an enemy. In fact, in many respects postmodernism is more a boon than a bane to the cause of Christ. Admittedly, it is not easy to characterize either modernism or postmodernism satisfactorily. There is the important reality that postmodernism in its cultural use has a wider range than its philosophical use. And even philosophically we need to talk of modernisms and postmodernisms. Enough qualifications. There are,

as I see it, a number of cardinal features of the postmodern ethos that stand out and need to be recognized, honoured, and accounted for in a Christian worldview – even if, in terms of the Gospel, they will be revised, even radicalized, in what I want to call a post-postmodern biblical worldview.

A limit to knowledge

First of all, postmodernism puts reason in its place. This is big stuff, since modernism placed supreme confidence in Reason (and Science) as the Answer to all of life's problems, the royal road to knowledge, security, and happiness. The ethos of modernism is mastery, control, and independence. Modernism asks: "What's the problem?" And then it says, "Let's solve it! After all, we have the technology and know-how. Any and every mystery – including the mystery of God – will eventually yield its secrets if we persevere." Postmodernism not only considers the claims of Reason illusions that need to be unmasked, but marks them as dangerous to people everywhere. In the public arena we are asked to bracket, deny, or ignore the very key characteristics which make us unique. We are asked to keep our differences – of gender, race, and faith – at home, personal and private. In brief, Reason neutralizes the other. The result has been that the ruling elites have passed off their own agendas as the voice of reason, often with the insidious consequence that the different and other, the less positioned and unprivileged, particularly the weak, the marginalized and the poor – those whom the Bible calls the strangers, widows and orphans – are set aside, and, if they resist, face discrimination and retaliations.

Life, says postmodernism, is more than logic. Not that there is no place for science and reason; there is, lots of space, and there are many accompanying benefits. And, yes, there are good reasons for our faith, but our faith is not based on reason. We are to have faith in God and not in Reason. No theory, no science will ever be able to encompass reality. We stutter before a



great mystery. In recognizing that there are tears in the fabric of reality beyond sense and good order and reason and logic, postmodernism recognizes the radicality of evil not as problem it can solve but a reality that we can dismiss only at our peril.

Free to serve

Secondly, postmodernism places extraordinary emphasis on responsibility to and for the other. This is a new and welcome note. Whereas in modernism, "freedom-from" is the first word, postmodernism insists that, before anyone says yes or no to the call of the other, we are already summoned to be responsible for the other. The face of the other, says Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, convicts us, calling us to responsibility. As a result, in contrast to modernism's focus on solving the problem in order to maximize individual freedom, the ethos of postmodernism is: listen to the singular who! See the suffering. Respond! Be wary of the human propensity for violence and evil – including our own. Act justly with compassion without any pretensions that we have the final solution. And pray without ceasing! Looking at responsibility as the first word reinterprets freedom, not in terms of being free from, but, in biblical terms, as being free to love and minister to the other. This ethical call to responsibility is not only congenial with the ethos of the Gospel, as I read it, but it also challenges us to readjust and refocus our worldview formulations.

Suffering-with

In our usual articulations of a reformational worldview, the place and role of suffering has, to my knowledge, not been given the place and attention that it deserves. There is a crying need for that to change. This is a huge topic for our common ongoing deliberations. Here I only have room for a comment or two after calling attention to certain striking Scriptural passages.

I still remember with surprise and even shock when I read, as if for the first time, that we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him...."

(Romans 8:17) Then, my eyes opened, I discovered that this theme of suffering with Christ is underlined and highlighted by Peter and Paul. Peter encourages us, "if you can have some share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad...." (1 Peter 4:13) Paul in Philippians (3:10) challenges his readers to imitate Christ by sharing in his suffering by becoming like him in his death, and somehow attaining to the resurrection of the dead. Wow! In Colossians (1:24) we are called to be part of Christ's continuing ministry of compassion, "completing," as did Paul, "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church." And, particularly in view of the current environmental crisis, it is important to recall that Paul in Romans 8 goes on to tell us that the entire creation is "groaning in pain" awaiting on tiptoes, as it were, for the revelation of the sons and daughters of God.

Jesus in Matthew 25 gives us a clue as how we are to suffer with him. The righteous, he reports, will ask: when did we feed you, visit, or clothe you? Then, the "King will answer, 'Inasmuch as you did this to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.'" As God is compassionate, and as God is with us (Emmanuel), so we are to be with others. As God suffers with those who suffer, we are called to suffer-with. In contrast to involuntary suffering-from that we all undergo, it is crucial to understand that we are called to a suffering-with. Suffering-with is a voluntary act in which there is the liberating power not only to resist suffering, but also to redeem creation.

The beauty of variety

Thirdly, postmodernism honors difference. Whereas modernism sees the "other" as a fundamental threat (either to dominate or be dominated by), postmodernism sees difference, not as defect or deficit, but as an invitation to enjoy, connect with, and learn together. The proper relation to the other person is respect, not domination, condescension, dismissal, or persecution. Genuine community is connection-in-difference, rather than the fusion into sameness. In our pluralistic, multi-faith world, the idea of non-oppositional difference signifying an excess that attracts and delights even as it challenges and claims is revolutionary and promising. Differences are lovely, painting a rainbow of colours, bespeaking abundance rather than lack.

Room for faith

Fourthly, postmodernism recognizes that everyone lives by faith. Whereas for modernism being neutral, without presuppositions or prejudices, was the order of the day, postmodernism champions the fact that we all begin somewhere, from someplace, with a certain fix on reality. None of us begins from a position of innocence. Prejudices are not all bad. In fact, we all have them. They

Prayer at Night

God be in my head and in my understanding
 God be in my eyes and in my looking
 God be in my mouth and in my speaking
 God be in my tongue and in my tasting
 God be in my lips and in my greeting
 God be in my nose and in my smelling
 God be in my ears and in my hearing
 God be in my neck and in my humbling
 God be in my shoulders and in my bearing
 God be in my back and in my standing
 God be in my arms and in my reaching
 God be in my hands and in my working
 God be in my legs and in my walking
 God be in my feet and in my grounding
 God be in my joints and in my relating
 God be in my guts and in my feeling
 God be in my bowels and in my forgiving
 God be in my loins and in my swinging
 God be in my lungs and in my breathing
 God be in my heart and in my loving
 God be in my skin and in my touching
 God be in my flesh and in my paining
 God be in my blood and in my living
 God be in my bones and my dying
 God be at my end and at my reviving.

Extended from the traditional prayer by Reverend Jim Coater and printed in his book *Prayer at Night*, Cairns Publications, Sheffield, England, 1988. Quoted from *Anatomy of Spirit* by Caroline Myss, New York: Three Rivers Press

Worldview

The church of Laodicea and atheists

are the frames, worldviews, from which and through which we see the world and make sense of it. We all begin and end in the surrender of faith.

Jacques Derrida, the influential French philosopher, ends his *Memoirs of the Blind* with a confession: "I don't know. I need to believe." Shades of Augustine! Whereas for modernism the fact that God is unthinkable, unprovable, and unrepresentable proved the irrationality, inadequacy and irreality of faith and God, for postmodernism the same features point to reality beyond the reaches of reason. Suddenly the reality of God in the universe is no longer so outrageous. Suddenly there is authentic space for faith, miracles and grace. No longer, in a post-modern world, can people of faith – in our case the Christian faith – be curtly dismissed as prejudiced because they champion their faith. Now they (we) can enjoy participating in the public arena as spokespersons of faith. That personally has been my experience in the academic world. Whereas before at times I felt dismissed because I after all was biased by my faith, in the last years I felt my contribution was welcomed especially because I spoke out of my faith.

Things unseen

Finally, postmodernism attends to and makes room for the invisible, the unconscious, the emotional, all the non-rational ways of knowing; not as second-rate, subservient, irrational forces to be repressed, feared or discounted, but as co-contributors in the panoply of human capacities. What is not said is just as important, if not more so, than what is said. The margins bleed into any text, just as the body of a text bleeds into margins. Hard and fast definitions, absolutes, do not exist. Everything is relational, and contextual. Stories or narratives are the woof and warp of the human experience, always on the go, in process, on trial.

This does not amount to an "anything goes" relativism. Rather, the fact that creation is in process, on trial, on the way, is an ethical call to increased vigilance. Every decision we take makes a difference – whether for good or for evil. Responsibility is once more front and center. Each day anew we

Bert den Boggende

About once every two months I lead a Bible study for seniors, dealing with the first few chapters of Revelation. The letters to the seven churches follow a general pattern, but the letter to the church at Laodicea deviates somewhat from that pattern. For example, the introduction is not taken from the first chapter, the deeds are generalized, there are no good deeds mentioned and there is no commendation. Compared to the other churches this one is by far the worst.

The city's state

Laodicea was one of the seven places named after a mother and a daughter of Syrian kings. This particular city, founded in the third century BC, was located east of Ephesus on the road to Syria near the river Lycus. Close by were hot springs, but when the water arrived in Laodicea it had become lukewarm. The city soon became the banking center of Asia Minor. It was well known for its medical school and its black wool.

The letter makes use of this background. Just as Jesus referred to the agricultural surroundings in his parables, so here he makes use of what the inhabitants knew very well. In Revelation 3:18 we read, "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich, and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness, and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see." The members of this wealthy church thought they were rich, but in reality they were poor and did not even realize it.

The congregation is called lukewarm, "neither hot nor cold." It has been characterized as complacent, deluded, and indifferent. It had a kind of "I don't care" attitude. Such attitude was contrary to everything Christ stood for and obstructed the coming of the Kingdom. Christ wished that they were either hot or cold. The congregation was quite unlike the Emmaus goers, whose hearts were burning (Luke 23:32), or Paul, who was so zealous in his mission work. And they were also unlike the pharaoh of the Exodus, or Ahab and Jezebel. The list on both sides can be significantly lengthened. The congregation was only lukewarm like the water from the springs when it arrived at Laodicea. It gave no thought about things to come. The following chapters deal precisely with things to come. In a way, this letter forms a bridge to the rest of Revelation. Because of their indifference, Christ is about ready to spit the congregation out of his mouth, although for individual members there is hope, since Christ keeps on knocking at their doors.

are to work out our responsibility with fear and trembling, for it is God that works in us. It is just in that last phrase that I see the beginning of a Christian post-postmodern worldview.

Whereas modernism seems fixated on its need to control, dominate, and exploit reality with all its attendant oppression and

injustice; postmodernism, with all of the positive features that I have noted above, is nevertheless so impacted by the unspeakable atrocities that modernism has spawned, so mesmerized by the human penchant for evil, that, even as it works for and longs for the coming of justice, it seems captive to the fear that, in the end, there is only death.

Being loved

Right at this juncture in human history, it strikes me, there is new and abundant opportunity for Christians, in all humility, to confess, that God is Love and that Love is stronger than death. Whereas Rene Descartes' "I think, therefore, I am" has served as the epitome of modernism, and "I think, but I don't know who I am" could be said to express a cardinal precept of post-modernism, "I was loved, therefore I am" encapsulates the heart of what could be called a Christian post-postmodern worldview.

In the Spirit of Christ, I know that in spite of sin and evil, in spite of the killing fields, we are not alone, God-is-with-us,

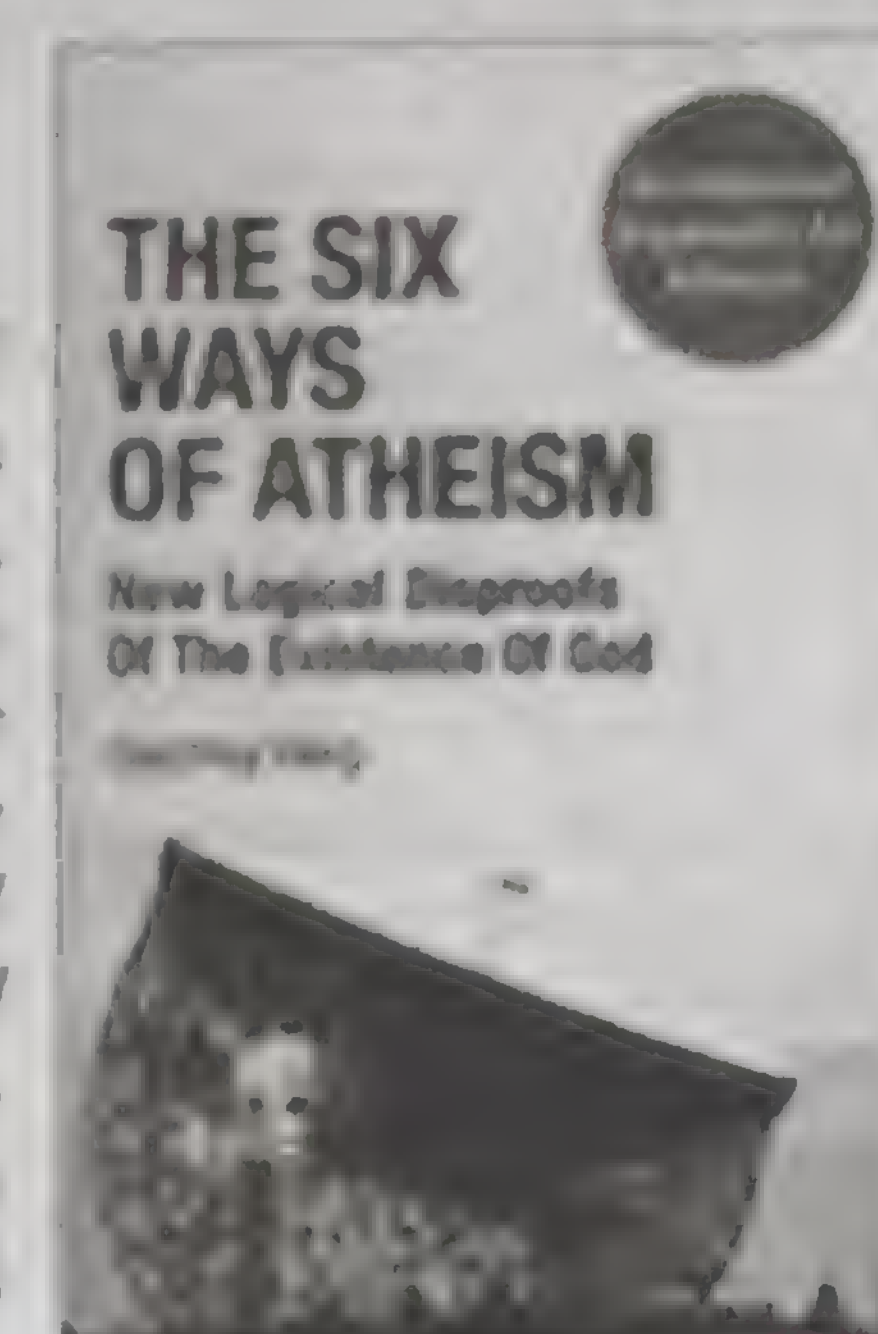
The tip of the Berg

What has this to do with atheists? Recently a church librarian gave me a booklet that the church had received, telling me that it did not fit the library and that I could do with it whatever I wanted. It was Geoffrey Berg's *The Six Ways of Atheism: New Logical Disproofs of the Existence of God* (2009). Does such a booklet not belong in a church library? Is the church afraid of the questions it poses and the thoughts it contains? Using logic, Berg gives strong reasons why he thinks God does not exist. He could be regarded as someone who is cold. And yet Christ states that he prefers someone like that to someone lukewarm.

In taking a stand, Berg had to think what made God God. He provides a list of eight essential qualities. "A potential monotheistic God," he posits, "must ... in my view ... be eternal, omnipresent, consciously controlling, our ultimate creator, omnipotent, supremely good, omniscient, and our purpose giver." Without these defining qualities he could not exist (p.146). Perhaps it should come as no surprise, therefore, that he dislikes modern theologians who try to diminish one or more of these qualities. In the book, of course, he tries very hard to prove that God cannot have these qualities. It is not my purpose to deal with his arguments. But do we engage atheists and know their reasons?

About a quarter century ago a fellow student asked me if God were all-powerful, could he destroy himself? I told him that God's power should not be separated from his love. If he destroyed himself, he would also destroy all humans in the process, and that would not be a lovable action. He seemed satisfied with my remark and he never asked a question like that again. A year or so later he told me that he was amazed at the influence of Christianity in history, something he had never thought and heard about in his undergraduate studies. It seems to me that it may be easier to discuss God with atheists than with those who are indifferent. Are we willing to engage them or do we shy away from them? Christ's observation to the congregation at Laodicea seems to suggest that there is more hope for the atheists than for the indifferent. ✎

Bert den Boggende (bertdenb@yahoo.com) has a Ph.D in British history and is a retired teacher who still does some substituting. He lives in Brooks, Alberta



Emmanuel. Love is happening in the world. Eros – God's cosmic love – is the energy creating all things, sustaining them, drawing everything together. It is the healing process at the heart of reality, making and remaking connections. And we are invited still more, we are called – as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ to share in his sufferings for the redemption of the world. What a challenge, what a mission! It is my prayer that we can together go forth with a daring and tender love. And whatever we do, may we do it in the name of Love. The world is waiting! ✎

Jim Olthuis taught philosophical theology for 40 years at the Institute for Christian Studies, and still supervises students, teaches occasional courses, and has a psychotherapeutic practice with Christian Counselling Services in Toronto. His last book is *The Beautiful Risk, a Christian post-postmodern approach to psychotherapy*. Jim welcomes responses to his article at jim0@icscanada.edu

Culture

Rotterdam, capital of Eurabia*

Harry Antonides

Rotterdam, Holland's second largest city and Europe's busiest port, is undergoing a revolutionary change that is more powerful in its impact than the bombing on May 14, 1940, that devastated the heart of that city.

Evidence of this momentous change is everywhere, writes Sandro Magister, who calls Rotterdam "the most Islamized city in Europe." He writes:

Here, entire neighbourhoods look as if they have been lifted from the Middle East. Here stand the largest mosques in Europe, here parts of sharia law are applied in the courts and theaters, here many of the women go around veiled, here the mayor is a Muslim, the son of an imam.

Giulio Meotti, Italian journalist, published a seven-part survey on Holland in the Italian newspaper *il Foglio*. The second in this series, entitled "Islam in Europe: In the Casbah of Rotterdam," is available on Catholic Online (www.catholic.org). The following is a summary of that article.

Pim Fortuyn, who was murdered on May 6, 2002, for his outspoken criticism of radical Islam, made his home in Rotterdam. His house was bought by a millionaire who wanted to keep it intact, in memory of the former owner. People still bring flowers and leave cards at the house. Someone left a card: "In Holland everything is tolerated, except for the truth." Not far from a Muslim neighbourhood stands a granite statue of Fortuyn, with the Latin inscription "*Loquendi libertatem custodiamus*," let us safeguard the right to speak.



Rotterdam mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb

Threats to freedom

Muslim lawyers in Rotterdam demanded changes in courtroom rules because Islam teaches that all men are equal. They recognize only Allah as a superior being and, therefore, they do not want to show deference to anyone by standing when the judge enters the courtroom. Lawyer Mohammed Enait, who heads the legal office Jairam Advocaten, has persuaded the court of Rotterdam that he has the right to remain seated. The court explained that there is no legal obligation on Muslim lawyers to stand in the court because such a demand is "in contrast with the dictates of the Islamic faith." Presumably, Mohammed Enait's notion of equality does not include all humankind, because he has refused shaking hands with women.

A well-known Rotterdam theater company has complied with sharia law by creating separate seating arrangements for men and women. Another theater group wanted to stage a performance about the life of Mohammed's favourite wife Aisha. The Muslim actors in the company told the director Gerrit Timmers that they had received death threats. An article appeared in a Rabat paper saying that the actors would end up like Salman Rushdie if they went



There are many muslim shops/stalls in Rotterdam.

ahead. Timmers explains this case of "self-Islamization," or voluntary dhimmitude: "For me, it was more important to continue the dialogue with the Moroccans, rather than provoke them."

The mayor of Rotterdam is a practising Muslim and several of the city council members are Muslims. One of them is Bouchra Ismaili, who caused a stir last year when in a letter to newspapers he wrote: "Listen up, crazy freaks, we're here to stay. You're the foreigners here, with Allah on my side I'm not afraid of anything. Take my advice: convert to Islam, and you will find peace."

Sylvain Ephimenco is a prominent Franco-Dutch journalist who is well-known as a sharp critic of radical Islam. Shortly after 9/11 he wrote an open letter to all Muslims in Holland in which he warned that they are allowing Islam to be taken hostage by the jihadists unless they begin to speak publicly against them without equivocation.

Ephimenco explains the growing popularity of Geert Wilders as a response to what many see as a threat from radical Islam. He

tells his interviewer: "Wilders is against the Frankenstein of multiculturalism." Ephimenco, too, is against what he calls the "betrayal" of the Enlightenment ideals of equality of men and women, and freedom of expression.

A great chill

Chris Ripke is an artist who has a studio close to a mosque. Shocked by the murder of Theo Van Gogh by a Dutch Islamist in 2004, he decided to paint an angel on the wall of

his studio with the biblical commandment "Gij zult niet doden" (thou shalt not kill). His neighbours at the mosque found these words "offensive" and complained to the city mayor. The mayor promptly ordered the police to erase the painting because it was "racist." A television journalist camped out on the spot in protest. The police arrested him and destroyed his film.

Ephimenco joined this protest by putting up a big white sheet with the same biblical commandment, which was reported on radio and television. He says, "If you can no longer write 'do not kill' in this country, then you are saying we are all in prison.... There is a great chill. Islamism wants to change the structure of the country."

Ephimenco thinks that a big part of the problem is that since the 1960s, religion was dying – "a unique event in Europe, a collective de-Christianization. Then the Muslims brought religion back to the center of social life. Aided by the anti-Christian elite."

Behind Ephimenco's house is a flourishing middle-class Islamized neighbourhood with Muslim signs everywhere, including Turkish flags. Close by is an important church, but it's empty, "no one goes there anymore." In the middle of one square stands a mosque with Arabic writing outside. "That used to be a church."

These six simple words tell a story that is astounding in its depth and meaning.

*Bat Ye'or, a specialist in the history of non-Muslims in Muslim countries, has coined the term "Eurabia" to describe the direction in which Europe is moving, that is, submission to Islam, or "dhimmitude."

Harry Antonides
hantonides@sympatico.ca



Essalaam-Mosque-Rotterdam



Business Directory

Bienke's story...continued from p. 12

All through the war years, Adam and I continued to see each other, growing closer every year. We knew we would spend our lives together. The war finally ended in May, 1945. Adam and I wasted no more time – a month later he and I exchanged our first public promises and were engaged. Unfortunately it was right after the war and there was no gold to make available for our wedding rings. But even this turned into a precious gift for us. Adam's parents gave us their wedding bands to make into engagement rings. Through our rings we obtained both a sense of the continuity of love and of the family affection that supported us. We melted them down into new rings with each other's names on

the insides.

Two years later, on August 7th, 1947, we were married by Dr. S. J. Roosjen in front of friends and family. We still had the treasured family rings and switched them from our right hands to our left. There were still a lot of shortages when we celebrated our wedding – we collected ration coupons for months to have enough sugar for the cake – but our celebration was



all the happier; the party lasted until five in the morning! We were both 24 years old when we were married but I was eight

months older than Adam.

We set up housekeeping in Haarlem, the capital of Noord Holland, where Adam had grown up until he was forced to flee underground to Andijk. His parents had lived their whole lives in Haarlem; we lived there for eight years. That gave me the opportunity to make some fine new friends. Today I am still in contact with some of those friends (Mr and Mrs Bauke and Doet Wester), even though they are still in Holland and I have not seen them for a long time.

Just a few months after our marriage, Adam and I experienced the pain of losing our unborn child. Early in 1948, however, we were overjoyed to discover that I was

pregnant again. We were, let me say, a little short of money, though. I could hardly buy anything for our first baby even though I dreamed of starting my new family with the best and most beautiful stuff. But we got on our knees and laid our worries before the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ knowing that if we needed it he would provide it to us. And we believed in what Jesus said: "Ask and you shall receive." Two nights in a row we prayed hard, then we laid the matter aside. And lo and behold, two days later we received a big check in the mail. Adam



1948-1954 home at 43 Hyacintelaan

came home so happy! It turned out to be a belated pay check for work he had done right after the war distributing clothing donated by other countries – work which he had considered to be volunteer work! So we were able to equip the baby with a charming little bassinet on a stand: the bed had a hood that extended halfway over it and beautifully lined curtains ruffling along the front. We bought her everything she needed – including an elegant baby buggy in a dark bordeaux with a white leather lining. When she was a little older, we were able to provide more sophisticated transportation for our little miss with a beautiful white and gray leather stroller. Boy, did we have the best and most stylish for her. Adam always insisted on buying goods in the best taste and highest quality.

To be continued in following issues.

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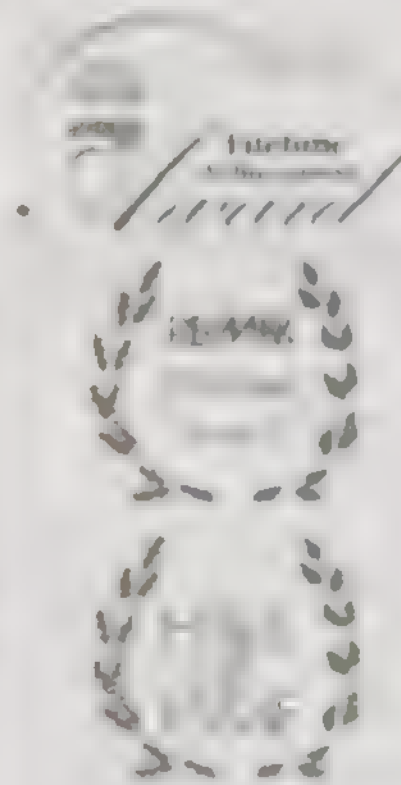
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Anniversaries



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celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on August 26, 2009.

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Obituaries

ARTHUR DAVIES

91, called to a new life in Jesus
died on August 5, 2009 in Holland, Michigan.

He's survived by his wife Olive

Children: Mark & Judy (Lynden WA),
Jim & Jane Lise, Caledonia ON
Calvin & Jan, London ON
Paul & Nancy, Shelbyville MI
14 grandchildren & 20 great-grandchildren.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Institute for Christian Studies (Toronto) & the Association for Public Justice (Washington DC).

Correspondence: 111 Burnside Dr, London ON N5V 1B4

RALPH NUMAN

went to be with his Lord on Tuesday September 1, 2009 at Grand River Hospital, Freeport Health Centre, Kitchener. Ralph resided in Kitchener and was born 87 years ago in Holland.

Beloved husband of the late Jennie Numan who predeceased him on August 17, 2005.

Dear father of Jim & wife Gina Numan of Millgrove, Ida & husband Bert Piel of Ripley, John & wife Ruth Numan of New Hamburg, Mary Piel of Kincardine and Teena Willboughby of Fonthill.

Sadly missed by 25 grandchildren and 35 great-grandchildren. Also remembered by sister Grace & husband Victor Wierda of Winnipeg and brother Gerk Numan of Holland. Ralph was predeceased by son-in-law Kim Willoughby, his parents Tjitze & Maria (de Jong) Numan and 2 sisters.

A private family interment took place at Parkview Cemetery, Waterloo prior to the memorial service on Wednesday September 9, 2009 at 3:00 p.m. at the Community Christian Reformed Church, Kitchener. Rev. Bernard De Jonge and Rev. Darin Roodra officiated. As expressions of sympathy donations may be made to Laurentian Hills Christian School, Kitchener, or World Vision. On line condolences and donation information at www.markjuztfuneralhomes.ca

Family contact: Jim Numan, 1371 Edgewood Road RR1 Millgrove ON L0R 1V0

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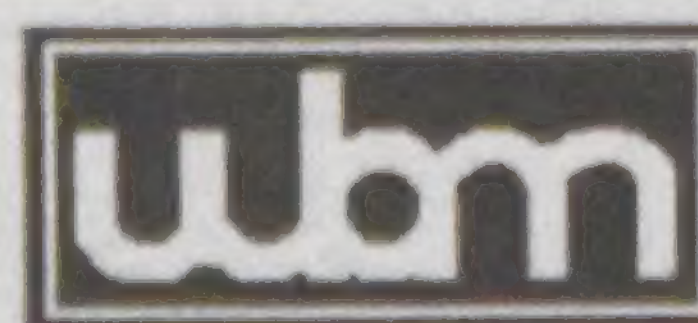
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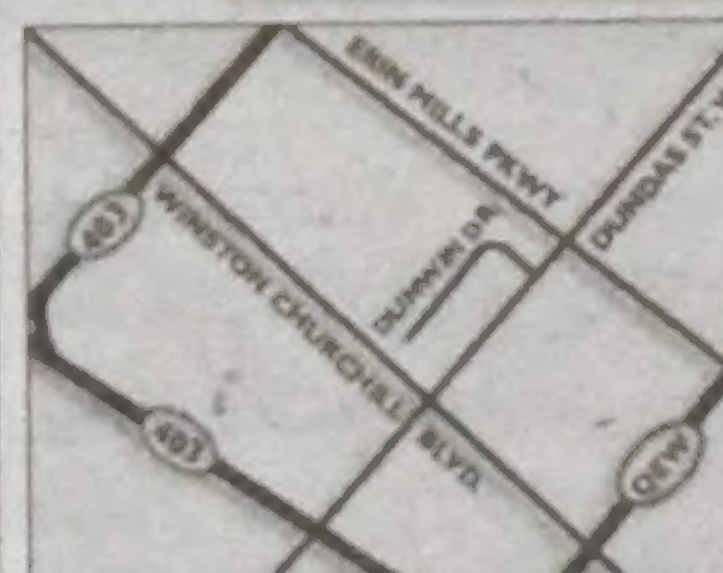


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DAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Celebrate THE LIGHT



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The 'Day of Encouragement'

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Visit our website for more information — www.diaconalministries.com



Michael Card

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sep 13** 60th anniversary of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in **Woodstock**. All former pastors, associates and congregational members are invited to a celebration service at 10:00 a.m. Lunch after the service. For further information call the church @519 539 5301 or email at mcrw@execulink.com.
- Sep 26** Worship conference, *Refresh and Renew*, Redeemer University College. For registration and information, visit www.redeemer.ca/worship Registration deadline: September 15
- Oct 3** The Netherlands Bazaar will be held in the Thornhill Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Ave. in **Thornhill**, Ontario. See ad.
- Oct 3** Organ recital at 7:30 pm, Hebron CRC, Hebron CRC, 4240 Anderson St. North, **Whitby**, ON. John Vandertuin, recitalist, composer and music critic will be performing classical and sacred selections with audience participation. For information, call **905-424-1213**
- Oct 4** Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.
- Oct 6** Organists Jonathan Oldengarm and Wayne Carroll, with violinist Noel Laporte and cellist Samuel Bisson, present a concert of works by Rheinberger, Reger, Durufle and Guillou at KnoxPresbyterian Church, 55 Hincks St., **St. Thomas**, ON. 7:30 pm. Tickets: \$15 in advance
- Oct 17** Diaconal ministries hosts the 'Day of Encouragement' featuring Michael Card at Redeemer College, **Ancaster**. See ad.
- Oct. 17** Leendert Kooij and the OCMA choir, Quartet and Brass do a "Benefit concert," for Eurovangelism. At Hebron C.R. Church, 4240 Anderson St. Whitby 7:30 pm. Special offering for missions.
- Oct 24** Hamilton Young Adult reunion for Young Adults of the late 70s and early 80s. Theme Find Us Faithful. Time 9:00 a.m. til 4:00 p.m. at Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby**. Visit our website <http://youngadults.myevent.com> for details or call Jake Ellens at 519-448-4321 or email hamiltonyoungadult@yahoo.ca.
- Oct 24** Leendert Kooij and the OCMA choir, Quartet and Brass do a "Benefit Concert," for Eurovangelism. At St. George's Anglican Church, 99 Woolwich St, Guelph, 7:30. Special offering for missions.
- Nov 20** Christian Festival Concert at 7:30 p.m. at the Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto. Call 416-636-9779 or email landmkooy@rogers.com See Ad.



Madman or God?

T

Christian history project

Ted Byfield is an 80-year-old Alberta publisher who has championed the Christian History Project as a way to teach today's generation of believers about the history of the faith they profess.

The aim of the Christian History Project is to produce a twelve-volume series (called *The Christians: Their First Two Thousand Years*) chronicling the entire history of the Christian church, from the Day of Pentecost up to the present.

The volumes seek to appeal to an intelligent, educated but non-academic reader, though the entire content is examined by professional Catholic and Protestant historians. The books are essentially educational. They do not seek to lessen the ills that Christians have done in the past, but nor do they overlook the great and admirable deeds of Christian people across the ages. In their coverage of conflicts between Christians, they attempt to present both sides as convincingly as possible and let the reader decide.

For more information on the Christian History Project visit the

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News

Fast for change on Oct. 16, World Food Day

Reflections on being hungry and being overfed



James Kornelsen

I recently spoke to a group of people about the fact that even though there is enough food for everyone in the world, nearly a billion people are hungry. One woman sought me out afterward, looking directly in my eyes and asking urgently, "What can we do?" It caught me off guard, how visibly upset she was by the information. At Canadian Foodgrains Bank we often talk about the number of hungry people. One in seven goes to bed hungry. At the same time, as many people (or more) are overfed. Many Canadians, though certainly not all, worry more about what to eat for the next meal than whether they'll be able to eat. That's why we also need to talk about the overfed. While the problem is complex, global inequalities do confirm the need to look at hunger as a matter of injustice.

The woman's response to me was unusual—more often, statistics give us negative feelings: hopelessness, apathy or pity. None of these is helpful. We often face messages in the media to the effect that there is not *enough*. Is there enough? If so, why are so many people hungry? If we look beyond the statistics, we can replace negative feelings with hope and a hunger for "food justice." Food justice aims to correct the imbalance and brokenness around food by addressing the inequalities and mending the broken relationships that cause many in the world to be without the most basic necessity for life: daily bread. But how do we get there?

Daily bread, unlimited

On October 16th, Christians across the country will have the opportunity

to respond by joining together to "Fast for Change." Fasting and praying may not be popular these days, but they are established spiritual practices within the Christian church. October 16th is World Food Day—a day when people consider the importance of food. It was established in 1946 and is observed internationally. This year, World Food Day occurs on the Friday after Thanksgiving, which is typically a season of feasting and celebration with our friends and families. It is a time when most of us have ample space to consider the blessing of having enough to eat. Giving thanks and reflecting on hunger don't often happen so close together, but I think it's actually a good fit.

Fast for Change encourages some healthy reflection around this point: Do we simply have too much? Do we at some point need to lament excessive con-

sumption? Perhaps the prayer in its original form is a challenge for someone who is certain of today's bread, secure about tomorrow's, and has no worries about the days ahead thanks to disposable income. But for those who are hungry,



I suspect it is a natural prayer, with no such feelings of presumption.

That gave me some insight into why the original version is so important. "Give us Lord our daily bread" becomes a powerful prayer when we consider both the hungry and the overfed. I asked myself who we mean by "us" and what is meant by "daily bread"? I now recommend offering this prayer both in solidarity with the poor and also as a request for God to reveal to us what it

means to have *enough*. We can identify with the poor and pray on behalf of all people when we say "us." We can begin to recognize global inequality, access to food, and overconsumption when we say "daily bread." While challenging us on the meaning of enough, it can also feed justice and hope and give us confidence in the prayer.

Fast for Change is designed by Canadian Foodgrains Bank to create space for all Canadians to reflect and pray, rather than to prescribe answers to these complex problems. What gives me hope is that it sparks a greater movement among Christians across Canada and across denominations, acting to promote food justice.

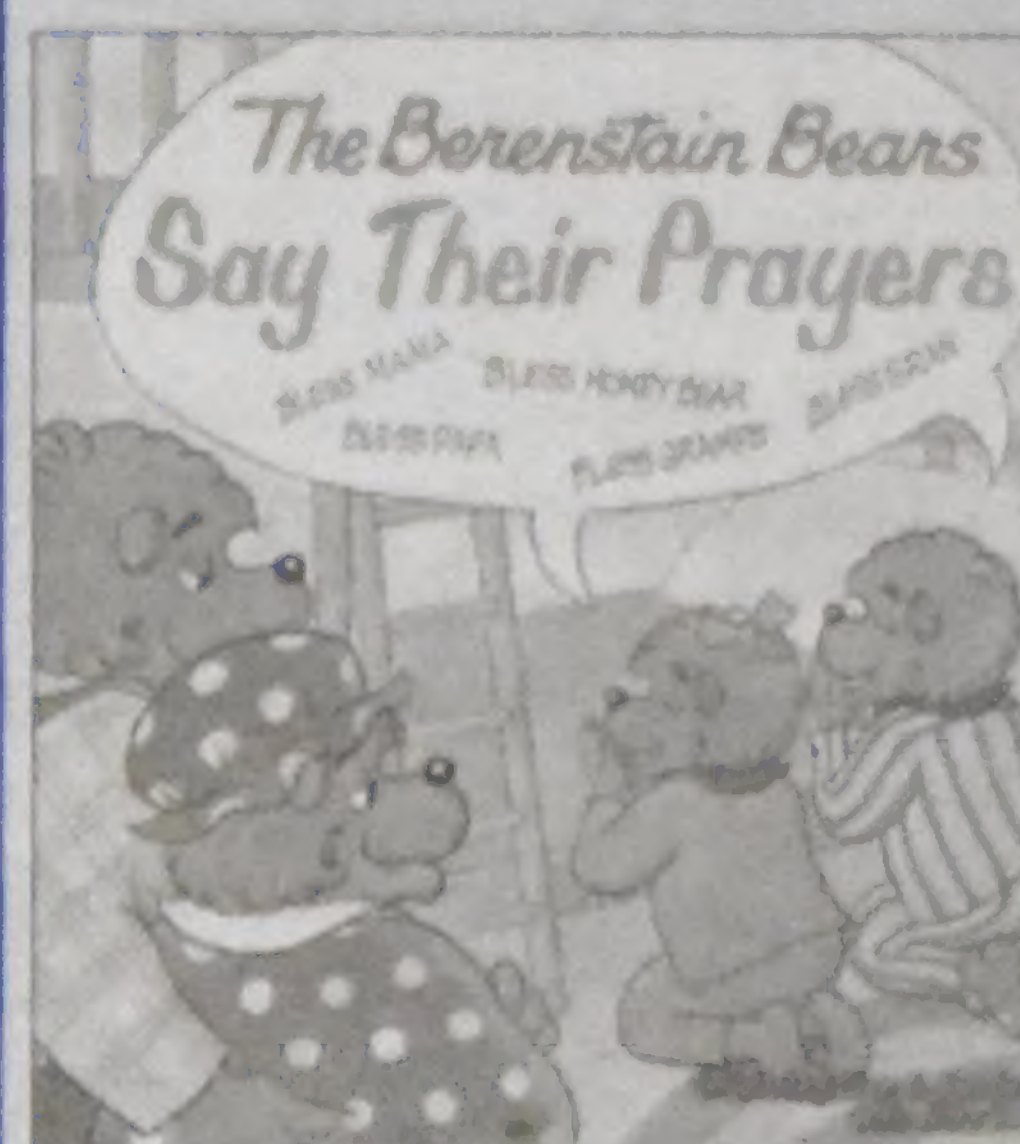
James Kornelsen is the Public Engagement Coordinator at Canadian Foodgrains Bank and lives with his family in Winnipeg. Participate and get a Fast for Change Resource Kit at www.fastforchange.ca



Odds and Trends

Down a sunny dirt road...

... somewhere deep in Bear country, Zondervan



has set up shop. Zonderkidz has hired the Berenstains to write 12 books that depict Mama, Papa, Brother and Sister as Christian Bears: going to church, learning to pray and loving their neighbours. Since Stan and Jan

Berenstain published their first book, *The Big Honey Hunt*, in 1962, almost 300 other titles have followed the adventures of the much-loved Bear family. Stan Berenstain died in 2005, and his son Mike is the main writer for the new series, with Jan—in her 80s—still helping to illustrate.

"Over the years," Mike Berenstain says, "my parents and I often heard from Christian families how much they appreciate the values-based themes of our books. By dealing with religion through the fun and laughter of the Berenstain Bears, we hope to nurture these families in their goal of raising children secure in their faith."

It's an admirable goal, but I'm not sure the didacticism will work. In *The Berenstain Bears Play a Good Game*, for example, when a soccer game gets too rough, Coach Papa is chastened by his Sunday School teacher's appearance on the field. This seems more likely to inspire eye-rolling than anything life-changing.

Let it all hang out

A study published in June warns that reusable grocery bags are dangerous. The cloth bags have become increasingly popular for toting everything from groceries to books. They've been promoted as an environmentally-friendly alternative to the single-use plastic bags that are choking North American landfills. This study, the first of its kind, found that 64 percent of the bags contained some level of bacteria. They were examined at two separate labs. Forty percent had yeast or mold, and some had minute levels of fecal intestinal bacteria.

Dr. Summerbell was commissioned to evaluate the findings. "If there's a little bit of spillage from meat or eggs, then food-poisoning organisms could be transferred over to other food," he concluded. This is what prompted headlines about the bags being dangerous.

Here's the problem: the study was sponsored by the Canadian Plastics Industry Association. And what they're calling a "health risk to Canadians" can be dealt with quite simply: educate people about the need to wash cloth bags frequently and air-dry inside out. Bag any items that could leak in a separate bag (meat, fish, fruits and vegetables). Don't use the same bag for groceries as athletic equipment or shoes. Those steps will go a long way to neutralizing any dangerous bacteria, which will give us more time to read up on studies about the consequences of a continent that throws out one trillion plastic bags a year.

Angela Reitsma Bick